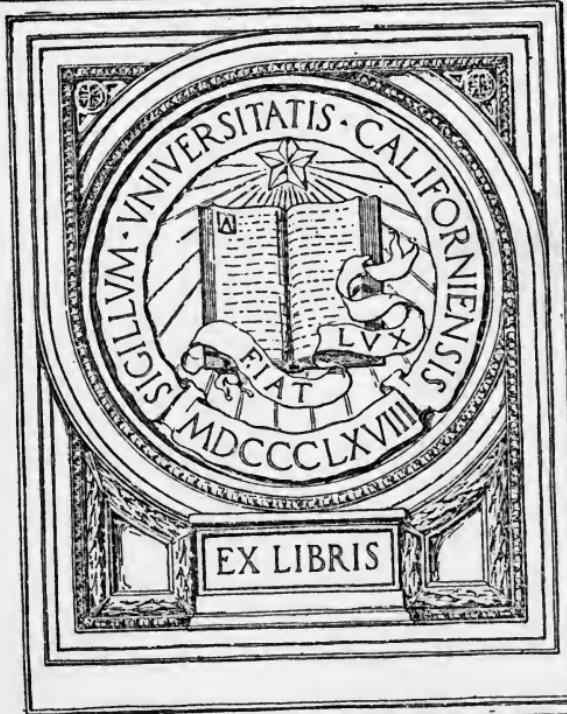


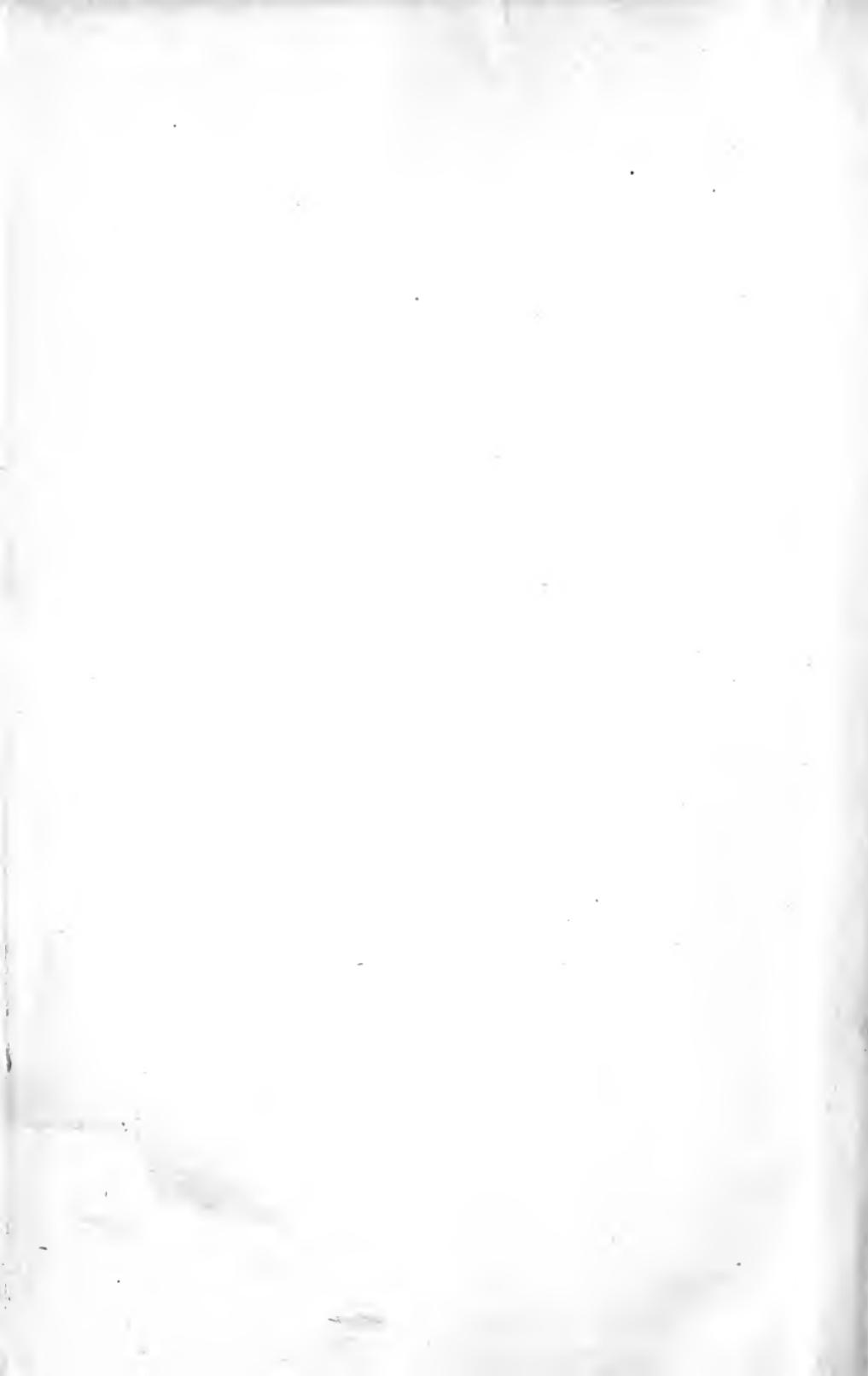
The GREATER MYSTERY

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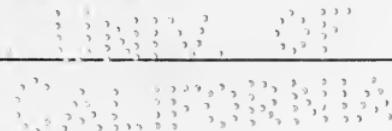
THE GREATER MYSTERY

BY
EDNA DE FREMERY

WITH FRONTISPICE ILLUSTRATION
BY THE AUTHOR



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THE GREATER MYSTERY



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“Love is a greater mystery than death”

CHAPTER I

Viola Mordaunt remembered distinctly the first time in her life that she was conscious of jealousy. It was in the day nursery at Haddon Court, one November afternoon, and she and her cousins, Pamela and Anne, had dressed their cats, named respectively “Bubble” and “Squeak,” in doll’s clothes.

“You be Mrs. Hatch in the village and ‘Bubble’ can be your baby child; ‘Squeak’ will be mine, and Robert’s,” Pamela indicated her small brother, who was anxious to be included at all costs, “can be the Vicar’s wife and bring us sweets and flannel.”

Viola had shrunk from the prospective joys of motherhood, and had turned her back on the beneficence of the clergy. Looking out of the window, she saw, over the burnished tops of the maples, a gray autumnal sky tinted with rose. The far distance, the delicate and illuminated perspective moved her to emotion that she could not express. “Let’s play that ‘Bubble’ and ‘Squeak’ are enchanted princesses and that, if we touch them with a fairy wand, they’ll have wings and be free and then we can fly with them away into the Sunset.” Stretching her arms out, Viola

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moved them up and down. She had felt herself flying out into the soft gray clouds.

Pamela and Robert laughed and Anne looking vaguely disturbed had said.

“Don’t be so queer Viola, if we are good we are to go down for tea and see Uncle Henry Gaunt. You had much better be Mrs. Hatch. See, the babies are beautiful—I’ll let you have twins.” But Viola was not appeased.

“Don’t you ever want to play a real pretend about some place you’ve never seen? I’m so tired of being a mother!”

Anne gathered up Bubble and Squeak with tenderness.” What else is there for us to be, but mothers? I’m sure I don’t want to go to some place I’ve never seen—do you, Pamela?”

With an air of great propriety, Anne had stepped forward, come under Melon’s brush for a few vigorous moments, and then, settling her sash carefully about her fat little person, had taken Pamela’s hand, and the two sisters had gone down the great stairway, to the dim hall, without a glance behind them at the follower of strange gods. Robert, after the manner of his kind, followed the two decorous and conventional ladies; and Viola, left alone with an angry Melon, gave way to violence.

“It’s *never* my way—they *never* do what I want—and their games are *so* dull—”

“Now, that will do—just get up from the floor.” A hand assisted her. “Here, I had you all clean—

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and now—look at your frock! It's the third to-day—you'll not go down. Let that be a lesson to you."

As Melon made these, no doubt, just remarks, a strange feeling had come to Viola. There had been twinges of the same thing before, when Anne and Pamela had been selected for favors or privileges that had not been extended to her; but as she had established a bad character for herself with the nurses, Viola had before this accepted her lot with the thought that it was more or less deserved. But on this occasion the punishment did not fit the crime. Because Anne and Pamela were too stupid to understand her games she must always suffer.

As she wept ignobly on the nursery linoleum, an unchildish resolution came to her. If she had to suffer, she would suffer *all* she possibly could. Getting up quickly and silently, Viola crept down the broad stairs, gaining the shadow of the lower hall, and installed herself behind the armour of a certain Henry Cecil Berrold Mordaunt, who fell at Flodden. Looking from behind this kindly shelter, she could, like the peri at the gates of paradise, see the fortunate occupants of the drawing-room. Lady Mordaunt and Uncle Henry Gaunt were seated comfortably before a bright fire. The tea-table was drawn up to them, and its bounties were being dispensed lavishly to Pamela and Anne, whose small features had assumed unnaturally virtuous expressions. Robert was standing by his Uncle, evidently giving respectful answers to some searching questions, for Viola heard

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Lady Mordaunt's high clear voice say, in a satisfied tone:

"Well, Henry, they're looking rather fit, don't you think?"

"Splendid, my dear Adela—I only wish I could say as much for Harold. The boy is seedy—he reads too much—I shall have to lend him to you; you have the magic touch." Sir Henry had sighed and his kind face had looked quite grave.

"Robert, here is something for you, old fellow, and two packages, for the girls. Will you give them to Anne and Pamela for me? And here is another. Why—by Jove, where's Viola? Here's her surprise—and I haven't seen the child!"

Lady Mordaunt turned to Pamela, "Where is Vi, dear?"

"She's in the nursery, Mother. She was quite naughty—and Melon said she was not to come down."

The armour of Henry Cecil Berrold creaked ominously from undue pressure brought to bear on it.

"Oh, come," interrupted Sir Henry, "don't tell me—just take this up to Viola, with my love, will you?"

And Pamela, looking a little disappointed, had made her curtsey and devoirs with punctilio, and departed upstairs, Robert and Anne following her. But Viola, fairly launched in crime, had stayed where she was.

In after years the memory of that room with its outlook through French windows on a green and

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rolling lawn, shaded by the rich autumnal foliage of the copper beeches, would come to Viola with the startling clearness of a cry. She would see the firelight flickering over the polished floor, picking out bright spots on the dark carved furniture, throwing strange shadows on the faces of the man and woman seated before it.

Sir Henry had spoken first, after the children had left, and his voice had sounded like a stranger's to Viola.

“Tell me, Adela, is she like—”

“Like the Mordaunts, Henry? No, not at all.”

“Like her mother?” His voice was anxious, yet determined too.

“In looks, almost exactly,” Lady Adela had answered, in a lowered tone—unlike any that Viola had ever heard her use. Even to the child there seemed something furtive in it.

“You know I only saw her once—but one wouldn’t forget, even if they had no such reason as we have for remembering. The dark hair, the eyes, the features, the foreign look—yes—Viola will be beautiful. She puts my girls to shame, now.”

“Poor little soul,” said Sir Henry. “Is she like any child—or is she—odd?”

“She’s fanciful—imaginative—I see Gerald in her—in that—It’s very complicated, you know—” Lady Adela sighed.

The butler came in with lights and took away the tea things; and Viola, stiff from her cramped

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position, slipped upstairs like a small shadow. Once in her bed, in the dark, she had buried her face in a pillow and cried with desperate abandon, saying over and over to herself, between her sobs, "My Mother—my Mother—my Mother."

After that night, Viola had always a companion, and her imaginative life, where her mother met her, became far more real to the child than her actual existence at Thorley. This incorporeal parent was invested with supernatural charms and became her child's champion for every real or fancied wrong.

Viola never spoke of the life she had created for herself out of her discovery, nor did she ask to know more than she had overheard. As the years passed, this separate and secret life of Viola's left its impression on her. Beside the pretty pink and whiteness of Pamela, and the engaging young strength of Anne, Viola's delicate beauty glowed like some exotic, strangely and inappropriately blooming with hardy garden flowers.

When she was nineteen years old, and just before she had gone up to London to be presented, Lady Adela, who was then widowed, had sent for Viola, and with every effort to spare the girl all she could, told her what it was necessary for her to know.

Viola's father, Gerald Mordaunt, younger brother of Lady Adela's husband, had been an exceedingly brilliant, but impulsive young man. In his twenty-ninth year he had gone to Paris as

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under secretary to the British Ambassador. He had his foot firmly placed on the ladder to success, when he had seen, and fallen violently in love with Julie de Beaujour, the young and exquisitely beautiful wife of Pierre de Beaujour, a delightful man and member of the Diplomatic Service. What efforts the two ill-fated lovers had made to keep to the path of virtue were never known, as de Beaujour, finding that his wife no longer cared for him, took a terrible revenge, and shot himself dead in her presence. All Paris had rung with the scandal, and Julie and Mordaunt, like two crazed creatures, had been married at a registrar's and flown to Russia, where they had known dreadful poverty, and where Viola had been born. At her birth Julie had died, and Gerald, in despair had appealed to his brother. On condition that Gerald make no future claim to his daughter, Mordaunt had consented to take the tiny thing.

At news of his brother's death several years later, Lord Mordaunt had been very much relieved. Lady Adela trusted to the girl's sweetness and the excellent bringing up Viola had been given to secure a happy life for her, though her aunt knew no more of Viola's real nature than she did of the Shah of Persia's. Lady Adela very truly had done the best she could for the child.

"My dear," she had concluded, putting her hand on Viola's shoulder and looking at her tenderly with her light and sincere eyes, "don't let this preposterous melodrama bowl you over.

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Remember that it was all done with sixteen years ago, and that you are, and always will be, one of my chicks. I count myself very lucky to have three daughters to take up to London. Suppose you ring now for Parkman, and order some Vichy and lemon?"

Viola rang, and then, going to her aunt, kissed her with very real affection and gratitude. In the little action, charming, and yet perfectly restrained, there was nothing of surprise. Viola had felt since her childhood, as many clever children do, that there was something remarkable about her parentage, and she had been justified in that thought by what she had overheard Sir Henry and Lady Adela say to each other. For many years that almost whispered conversation had brought a mysterious and cherished figure, clothed in romance, to Viola; and as she had grown up, she had felt no curiosity to substitute facts for the flower of her own fancy. As Lady Adela told the brief history hurriedly, the girl's mind caught the salient points of youth, and love, and beauty, rising like a flame from the darkened embers of tragedy—and she felt that her young parents had triumphed. Of the shadow of dishonor that had hidden them from her, until now, she gave no thought.

"Was my father handsome, Aunt Adela?" she asked, shyly, over her glass of Vichy.

"What, my dear? Oh—yes—very," Lady Adela answered, uncomfortably. She was suffering

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from being screwed up for a scene that had not come off; and was now frankly distressed at discussing such a man as Gerald Mordaunt had been, with his young daughter.

“Was he? and my mother?”

Lady Adela made a last effort. “Your mother, Viola, was so lovely—that—that really—it was not right—it was hardly respectable. People—followed her—turned to look, in theaters. I myself only saw her once and that was at the Opera in Paris. She seemed really unconscious of the way people stared—I suppose she was used to it. She sat a little in back of us, and both your uncle and I suffered from wry neck for several days afterward. If you are not careful you will be very like her.”

“Really, Aunt Adela—why, how *heavenly!*”

“*That*, my child, remains to be seen. At any rate, your character is your own, and will have more to do with your chances of heaven than your face.”

And Lady Mordaunt, infinitely relieved that her task was done, took up her keys and departed to the store-room.

But something sang in Viola’s heart with the glad voice that might come from the figure of Hope that is blindfolded.

CHAPTER II

There was a figure in society when Viola and her cousins went up to London that was surrounded by the prestige of fear. The behavior of this man had kept members of the smart set refreshed with anecdote, and quivering with expectation. Clever women angled for him to attend their parties, with varied success, and men in their clubs sought him out. And they did this simply to hear what he would say to them—to draw down some fresh and remarkable sarcasm.

Andrew Ian McIvor was the name of this man, and he had come down from the fastness of his native stronghold in Wales like a wolf on the fold. He was forty years of age and filled with an overwhelming sincerity which Londoners took for everything but what it was. In their eyes he was endowed with the uncanny gift of clairvoyance. Aside from his conversational powers, he was unmarried, possessed of some twenty thousand a year, estates in Wales and Sussex, and a town house in London. This last, a gloomy Tudor mansion, was left by McIvor as he found it—in a remote and hideous period of walnut. Some really splendid family portraits by Romney and Reynolds, in their happiest manner, were the only spots of beauty in the place. One, the portrait of a

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dissenting minister at the time of John Knox, was very like the present owner. The same tall, angular figure, the dark head with its narrow brow and deep set burning eyes, the high nose and the thin austerity of the lips, were almost absurdly like his descendants; with one difference, where the artist had covered his subject's hands by the folds of the gown, McIvor might have placed his without dread of comparison beside the molded perfection of an Apollo. Fine in line, beautiful in proportion, with a look of strength and delicacy combined, McIvor's hands seemed a gracious protest of nature against the harshness of his physical equipment.

On a windy morning in November, McIvor sat in his ugly breakfast room looking over his mail. Out of the mass he extracted a letter at random, which proved to be a wail of reproach from an "improved" tenant on the Sussex property. At the cost of much personal trouble and no little expense McIvor had gone over the village with care, substituting tiles for the disreputable but picturesque thatches, draining the roads and lanes, and installing modern plumbing. By these benefactions he had called down, not blessings, but curses on his head, this morning's correspondent alluding darkly to a right of way that had been ignored by the new model gymnasium McIvor had presented to the village. The law was invoked and threats of "proceedings" dotted the angry letter. McIvor read it to the end, then laughed a little contemptuously and put it care-

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fully on file. It was characteristic of the man that he had no secretary. The next communication was a note from Lady Evelyn Malloring asking him to dine, informally with her that evening. "We have a delightful house guest, young Viola Mordaunt. Do come and help me make it pleasant for her—" Lady Evelyn wrote.

McIvor drew his brows together. "Mordaunt—Mordaunt—where did I hear that name?—surely—there was something extraordinary connected with it, but I can't place it. It's incredible of Lady Evelyn to want me to make things jolly for a young girl. I'm not exactly a festive person—however—" he got up slowly, gathering his correspondence together, "I shall go to astonish her."

That evening at eight o'clock, McIvor was put down in front of Lady Malloring's in Half Moon street; but before walking up the red carpet that had been laid on the pavement, he threw his head back and looked up at the wintry sky. A sharp wind was blowing, and ragged clouds swept across the heavens, through which a pale moon shone fitfully. Night in London presented a new scene to McIvor, and as its airs brushed his cheek, he was conscious of kinship with the moods of nature,—of man's response to the heavens, as the tides of the earth are subject to the moon. Something in the wan and sinister light filled him with a feeling of depression, as though he had been made suddenly aware of some impending and unhappy fate that he would be unable to avert.

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“I’m fey tonight,” with a shrug of his shoulders, McIvor ran up the stairs and was admitted to the light and charming house of the Mallorings. Lady Evelyn greeted him cordially, and with no trace of the astonishment that she had really felt at his acceptance of her invitation. She was a small blonde woman, who, if the fates were kind, could be exquisitely pretty, but who, personally, had no instinct at all for dress. When gowned by a dress-maker of conscience, in a shade of midnight blue that brought out the lovely color of her eyes, she was charming, but like the chameleon she was at the mercy of her background, and always, like that animal, unconscious of it. Tonight’s was, however, a fortunate selection—and McIvor looked at her small figure, as she came towards him, with pleasure. His dissenting eyes could not have told why—but his artistic hands knew.

There were only eight guests dining, and as McIvor was the last, and was to give his arm to his hostess, they went out at once.

Lady Mainwarring, a large brunette, who was aggressive with health, and had defied heaven, Lord Mainwarring, and her complexion by dressing in purple, was on McIvor’s left talking vigorously to Lord Arthur Drummond, who was a member of the Upper House. She had magnificent breath control, and an undoubted gift for oratory of the impassioned type—and poor Lord Arthur, a man of the mildest and most domestic nature, whom the accident of birth had visited with a political

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career, and a militant suffragist for a wife, felt that he was drowning in a sea of words—and cast a desperate glance at the lady on his right, who had been hidden from McIvor's amused glance. At Drummond's movement, however, her profile came into view, thrown into sharp relief against the dark paneling of the room. In his astonishment, McIvor spoke aloud:

“Why, *who*—is she?”

Lady Malloring turned to him—

“You are not quite definite—but don't point; I see that you are looking at our house guest, at Viola Mordaunt.” She brought out the girl's name with the slightest precision, and looked at McIvor to see if it had made any impression.

“Her beauty must be my excuse—it positively startled me—”

McIvor managed a short, forced laugh that sounded wildly unnatural to himself. But his hostess would not let him off.

“Is that what startled you,—really—or was it a—a likeness to anyone?” She fixed her blue eyes on him curiously.

Before McIvor's inward vision was a scene so distinct that he seemed to be moving in it again. He was a boy of eighteen in Petersburg with his tutor. They were in the dining room of the Winter Palace listening to an orchestra of stringed instruments. The audience was made up of Russians, French, and a good many English; a man and woman had come in a little late and

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seated themselves near the door, and McIvor had stared at them with the sheer wonder of one who makes a discovery. Their beauty had seemed like the proclamation of a great truth, the truth that in the love of man and woman immortality is sometimes made manifest. As the boy had looked at them he was conscious of a murmuring and shifting around him, and several English couples that were near the two had looked with an insolent and brutal curiosity at them, and had then moved their seats. He had seen the man in the doorway flush, furiously, and he had watched the woman smile at him, tenderly, and as though she were a little amused; and she had kept him there until the concert was over. Afterwards, he had heard their story,—and he had never seen them again, but he had never forgotten. And tonight he saw that woman's face looking at him across Lady Malloring's flowers.

“Does she,” repeated Lady Evelyn, patiently, “remind you of any one?”

McIvor raised his beautiful hands to his eyes for a moment before he answered, and then, facing her squarely,—smiled.

“Not in the least, Lady Malloring,—but, I hope you will present me.”

The delicate malice that dwelt in Lady Evelyn was satisfied. The saint in McIvor, the man of ruthless truth, had been betrayed. London would fear him no more. She knew that he had lied to her, and she had seen the verdict the fates decreed

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Viola Mordaunt, in this lie. It was evident they had turned up their thumbs.

After dinner, Lord and Lady Mainwarring and the Drummonds went on to a reception, but the Mallorings had a box at Covent Garden.

“It’s *Otello*,” Lady Evelyn announced in an off-hand way to her husband, who was one of those singular but by no means unusual people in whom there is a dislike of music so acute as to cause them almost physical pain when they are obliged to listen to it. Lady Malloring knew perfectly how Sir John felt, and had, in the first years of her marriage, spared him when she could. But lately she had taken up a new and very soothing religion, whose tenets supported one in ignoring all that did not please, and she sought to help her husband by an application of those precepts.

He cast her a reproachful but patient look, but as he adored her absolutely, got into the motor like a lamb. Lady Evelyn, a little flushed by her victory, and laying its cause to astonishing mental and moral progress, gave him a fleeting and triumphant smile, that caused a glow of pride, at being its possessor, to warm Sir John’s heart.

“She thinks she’s managed you,” his far from dull intelligence informed him.

“Well, let her,” responded his affection, “She’s pretty enough—I’m for her.”

Owing to Lady Malloring’s little coup, her party arrived five minutes before the curtain rose. Poor Sir John made inward lamentation at his ill fortune

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in not being spared anything, and even Lady Evelyn cast a look of dismay at the empty stalls, which, however, gradually filled with miscellaneous, and to her, unknown faces; critics, reporters, semi-smart people and, incidentally, music lovers.

Looking through her glasses, from their ground box, to the opposite ones, Lady Malloring perceived that a Royal Personage was in attendance, and that above in the tiers, the opera glasses of many of her friends were leveled at the occupants of her own box. Lady Malloring had managed the seating cleverly, so that Viola was in front with McIvor in back and a little to her right; Sir John lurked miserably in the back, and would not be placed,—Lady Evelyn sat next a chair for him, quite by herself, where she commanded an excellent view of the house, if not such a fine one of the stage.

It was a brilliant audience, and though to Lady Evelyn it was nothing new, to Viola Mordaunt it seemed an exciting and stimulating prelude to some remarkable experience. McIvor, his own face in shadow, was able to watch the fascinating play of expression on the girl's, as the curtain rising disclosed a tavern with an arbor, and in the background a quay, and evening light on angry water. To Viola, who had been kept in the careful seclusion of the English school girl, her first sight of the theater, the visualization of what she had loved in literature, moved her tremendously. As

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the conductor raised his baton, he released a magic flood of harmony on which Viola floated. But the fear of being ridiculous in her enthusiasm, made Viole turn what she thought was a composed face to McIvor.

“Rosinni is in splendid voice, isn’t she?”

“Tell me, Miss Mordaunt,” McIvor brushed her banality aside in a characteristic way, “does Otello interest you?”

“The man? or the play?”

“You have answered me. You said ‘the man,’— he lives to you. Shakespeare did not over-rate the infinite patience of woman, or the infinite ego in man. Poor Desdemona pathetically enumerating the woes he had told her:

‘Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,

Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads
touch heaven—

It was thy hint to speak, and of the torments

Borne by thy noble self—’

presents, does she not, a living sacrifice, in the first act?”

“Why,” said Viola with warm championship, “no, she’s lovely, and she liked his telling her all that.”

“Didn’t it bore her? I mean, doesn’t it seem an imposition on his part, giving her all his bogeys?”

McIvor spoke with a curious intensity, and Viola, turning to him with an impulsive movement that was very feminine, answered his mood,

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with sincerity. Long afterward she remembered this conversation:

“Desdemona says,
‘I saw Otello’s visage in his mind,
And thus to him did my soul consecrate.’

She’s splendid—but,” McIvor looked at Viola with his peculiarly bright eyes, “I think that was the beginning of the trouble, don’t you?—or it would be in a modern instance; a man seeking the understanding of an intelligence, the woman answering with her emotions.” McIvor shifted in his seat. “Is my idea repellent to you? Would you prefer—” he gave a short laugh:

“‘You loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved you, that you did pity them’”?

Lady Evelyn leaned forward and touched Viola on the arm. “What *are* you talking about? I can’t understand a word of this Italian. Do, Viola, for pity’s sake, say something to John—Oh, hush—there it goes again.”

Before Viola could turn to her host “it” began with the wistful refrain of the prelude for the fourth act. As she gave her attention to the scene, Viola was conscious that McIvor had moved a little nearer, and that his hand, which had replaced her cloak very gently on the back of the chair from which it had slipped, still retained part of the cloak in its grasp. Viola was as aware of the concentration of his mind on her, as she was of his hand holding the wrap delicately. And this concentration of his seemed to go with her into the absorbing play.

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The tragedy being finally accomplished and the audience once more in a blaze of light, Viola put a handkerchief to her eyes, to hide the tears that had sprung there. Sir John in the good humor natural to one released from torment, patted her consolingly.

“Nice cheery little piece, my wife fancied—forget it, my dear. The only thing I can’t forgive them, is that the killing didn’t come off in the first act!”

“Tell me,” McIvor touched his host on the shoulder, “do you ride tomorrow morning?”

“Yes, at ten, old fellow—join me?” There was a touch of surprise in Sir John’s voice.

“With pleasure, if I may. I’ve a new mare, Irish bred, that will stand a deal of handling. You care for horses, Miss Mordaunt?”

Viola looked up, and McIvor met her glance that was full of astonishment. She had been in the darkened room with the murdered lovers, and she thought this man had been with her there. And now—he asked in the most ordinary way if she liked horses.

“Why, yes, of course—surely every one cares for them.”

McIvor did not take his eyes from hers. “You could never be like every one, and—” he added slowly, “I want to know you better, if I may.”

Lady Malloring, caught by two bores that wanted a peep at McIvor and Viola, refused their pressing invitation to go on to the Ritz, with

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decision, and managed to get her party safely into the motor again. "It's high time for you to be in bed, my dear," she said to Viola, relaxing, and becoming almost maternal in her feelings, as she thought of the comfort of being tucked up. Her interest in her protégé had been more than justified. Viola's beauty *was* extraordinary; the impression she had so evidently made on McIvor, that man supposedly composed of the granite of his native hills, being proof enough. Life was not an exciting thing personally to Evelyn Malloring, but she liked it to be interesting to look at from a safe vantage, and to-night she really had a feeling of giving a turn to the wheel of fate.

McIvor had insisted on walking and found the deserted streets with relief. The cold wind had died and the moonlight fell in delicate and luminous patterns through the branches of the plane-trees that bordered the pavement, and to which some withered leaves still clung. A faint, white mist, like the breath of approaching winter, filmed the air, and made McIvor, as he walked rapidly towards Cadogan Square, think of his native and beloved Wales and its especial corner in whose interest he had come to London. He saw the gray walls of Trevwithin set in its green gardens, and the waters of the Conway slipping swiftly below them to the little town of Glas Ogven, with its great slate quarries and its workers that looked to him surely for help. Caught in the grasp of the Snowden mountains, menaced by the sea at

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its feet, Glas Ogven looked up to Trevwithin that McIvor had restored, and lived in that he might answer their need. And to him their need had always come first. To-night he had wanted to share his knowledge of the villagers and their lives—he had wanted to speak of his work to a woman whose face had brought to him across the years the memory of love like a flame that had warmed him as he looked on it, but had destroyed utterly the life that had touched it. McIvor had forgotten that destruction.

CHAPTER III

It was Christmas week and Thorley was once more full of life and activities. Pamela and Anne who had, it must be admitted, suffered a diminished shining in London because of the exceeding effulgence of Viola, were more than pleased to be at home, and the old place had answered with the pathetic and undeniable response of inanimate walls for those whom they have sheltered. There had been a light fall of snow, and the gardens and graveled paths were dusted with it.

As the motor brought Lady Adela and the three girls from the station through the welcoming village, up the long avenue of beeches to the house itself, all four of them felt a tug at their heart strings at its familiar but almost absurdly picture-card aspect.

“You get them, five for a penny, at the ‘Green Man,’ don’t you, Aunt?” Lady Adela, wrapped to the eyes, peered at Viola vaguely. She did not understand what Viola was talking about, and was too cold to inquire. Pam, however, faced her cousin with a quick little motion: “You’re making game of the old house, aren’t you? Perhaps you’d like a futurist place better.” Pamela was quick to detect any un-English trait in Viola, and since she had been forced to observe her successes, Pamela thought she had seen a good many.

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Stamping their chilled feet and wringing their cold hands, the family trooped into the house and were fussed over and made comfortable by the delighted servants.

Melon, grown gray, and severely buttoned up, in decent black, took proud possession of Pamela, whose rather large features were quite red and inflamed from the drive through the cold air. Viola, slipping off her heavy wrap, and turning a face that glowed like a rose, spoke cordially to the old thing, but received a prim response. Melon had never approved of her, and the fact that she now so visibly outshone Pam was not to be forgiven.

A cry of surprise from Lady Adela, who had been opening some telegrams before the fire, brought the girls to her.

"Robert is coming down from Oxford—will be here to-night—that's fine, isn't it? All of us together for the holidays. But here, my dears, is the real surprise!" She held an opened telegram up dramatically, but fixed her eyes on Pamela.

"Well, mother?" said that maiden, stirring impatiently.

"Don't get waxy, Pam—let the blow fall, please—mother." Anne looked at her mother patiently, as one practicing forbearance towards an inferior, but harmless intelligence. "Aren't you curious, Viola?" Lady Adela, determined on her sensation, waited for Viola's quick nod.

"This is it, then. Your cousin, Harold Gaunt, whom you have not seen since you were infants, is

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home, on leave from India, and will be in this house to-night. The motor has left to fetch him—and that, my dears, is the dressing bell; I haven't been so happy in years!"

The good lady, clutching a miscellany of wraps and bags, and with her small toque pushed to the back of her head, still managed to put an arm about Viola. "I'll come to your room a minute, dear, to see that everything is comfy." Arrived there, however, and deposited hospitably by Viola, in the little chintz armchair, by the fire, Lady Adela did no looking, save at the heaped and brightly burning wood.

Viola, noticing, despite her aunt's utterly disheveled condition, the somewhat pensive expression of her face, sat down, quietly, by her, and presently Lady Adela, warmed unconsciously by the sympathetic silence, as well as the warm blaze, spoke shyly.

"It would be awfully nice, wouldn't it, Vi?"

"What, dear?"

"Why, if—what Henry Gaunt and I had planned so long ago should really happen. If Harold and Pam—I think they would be suited. And to have my girl marry some one whom I know. He's quite splendid, you know, took the V. C., probably he would retire, and they could have Hampton, it will be Pam's, anyway."

"Have they written?"

"I rather think so. But of course I don't know. Pam is secretive with me—in fact," Lady Adela

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raised her kind face, with the rakish hat on top, somewhat plaintively to Viola's. "So is Anne, but of course they would tell me anything important. Well, dear, I must run along—You won't breathe a word of what I've said—I want them to be quite simple and natural together, and without any idea that we are thinking things."

Lady Adela, once more gathering up her belongings, stood and looked at Viola. As she did so Pam's face, with its prominent highly colored features, light eyes, and decisive expression, came before her mental vision—not through the loving and maternal medium through which Lady Adela usually saw her daughter. While her inner eyes glimpsed Pam, her outer ones saw Viola, with misgiving. Surely it had been unnecessary for Vi to have everything. The slender, well poised figure—the dark hair gathered in a dusky heap and crowning her lovely little head with soft curls—the eyes, their brown gaze veiled with creamy lids, and made mysterious by black and exquisitely curling lashes—the little, delicate nose, turning up ever so slightly over the red lips.

As Lady Adela looked at Viola her expression became piteous, her voice even trembled a bit:

"Vi, dear, for my sake, give Pam a chance, won't you? Men, you know, are awful fools."

"What in the world, dear?"

"It's hard to say—to you—but look in the glass! Wear something old; do your hair unbecomingly, if you can—be late—be awkward and

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untidy—talk politics, tout for Suffrage, or the Radicals, and don't for heaven's sake—don't look at Harold Gaunt as you are looking at me, now, or he will have to kiss you, as I do.” Lady Adela drew Viola's head down to her and kissed her tenderly.

“I'm too old to hate you for my own sake, and too fond of you to do it for my girls—but, be as careful with us as you can.”

Viola lifted an astonished face, one sincerely surprised, as Lady Adela saw, and marveled to see.

“Aunt, what nonsense! but if Harold is preserved, of course I'll keep off. We'll both be late and frowzy for dinner to-night—it's a judgment on you!”

The gong for dinner sounded faintly. Lady Adela, making a wild snatch at her toque, succeeded in pushing it quite over the back of her head, where it hung by one hat pin. Her hand bag, always overfull, being caught up in desperate haste, was unable to bear extra pressure, and burst wildly open, disclosing disordered contents, and Lady Adela crushed them down, but Viola, moved by pity, took the bag away from her, and gave her aunt a gentle pat by way of assistance from the room.

Alone, Viola stood quietly by an open window for a moment. The night was clear, studded with brilliant stars, and a breath of frost in the air promised a good day for a run with the hounds. Viola's horse Eileen, a black Irish beauty, had not

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been sent up to London, and it was quite six months since Viola had been on her. Riding in the Row was not the same thing as the free gallops across the meadow and in the open country that Viola had always taken when the spirit moved her to be away from people, soothed by the indifference of nature.

Straining her eyes in the darkness Viola could make out the stables—a boy with a lantern held his small light high for a moment before going in, and Viola half fancied the horse he was leading in was Eileen.

“But that’s nonsense!” she said to herself. “To-morrow will come, and then I shall have a real ride!”

As she moved from the window, a discreet tap was heard at her door, and opening, Viola saw Melon, grim with disapproval.

“The others are waiting, Miss. Her Ladyship asked if you would be so good as to come right down?”

“But—heavens!—I’ve not changed!”

“No, Miss, but that’s what she said.” Melon withdrew.

“Very well—” Viola frowned, then touched her white blouse, which was not fresh, and was open at the throat. “I’m disgusting, I’ll take away their appetites—but heaven forbid! not Pamela’s admirer!”

A few moments later, entering the drawing room quietly, Viola saw Harold Gaunt for the

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first time in her life. He was talking to Lady Adela or rather smiling down at her, while she talked nervously and disjointedly to him. He was a big man, and though dinner was late and he had evidently come a long way, he did not seem impatient, but kept the very blue gaze of his eyes bent on Lady Mordaunt, as she struggled with the intricacies of a story that had been amusing, even brilliant, when told to her, but became involved, elusive, devoid of point, when she attempted it herself. Her little effort at wit made Pamela irritable, and she moved over to her mother, her strong, rather heavy figure, in its blue gown of determined simplicity, held stiffly.

“Shall we wait any longer, Mother, for Viola? She may not be coming down, and poor Harold must be famished.”

“Oh, not at all, thanks, very much. It’s jolly being here; let’s wait—if she’s coming? I’ve never seen Viola, you now. She was at school both times I made my visits to you. I’m anxious to know her—” Harold smiled pleasantly at Pamela’s effort on his behalf, and then, attracted, possibly, by Viola’s eyes upon him, turned and saw her, in traveling skirt and tumbled blouse.

Lady Adela noticed at once the change of expression that came into his face; she had seen it before when people looked at Viola—there was a concentrated and delighted surprise in it, as one seeing visions made flesh. Lady Adela sighed, but advanced to her niece.

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“Come, dear, this is your cousin Harold Gaunt. He was just saying that he had never met you, and perhaps, was thinking that he never might!”

“I know, Aunt, forgive me for being late, but—”

Gaunt took her slight hand and held it for a moment firmly. “But what?” he said, “what has kept you from rushing down to meet me? I’ve had a most tremendous desire to see you—I’m just home from Kairpur, from India; this is my first English Christmas in five years.” He released Viola’s hand, and turned to Lady Adela. “You are making them up to me—those years in the desert.”

At the note of sincere warmth and feeling in his voice, Lady Adela’s face flushed and her kind eyes were suffused. “Dear boy,” she murmured, putting her hand on his arm, “we love having you. With Robert coming, we are going to be a complete family, for once. You may take Pamela out, Harold, dinner is waiting.”

The dining room at Thorley was both long and wide. The ceiling was crossed by heavy beams of oak, darkened by age almost to black. In the great fireplace huge logs burned and rested on massive andirons of beaten brass, whose polished surfaces reflected the dancing flames. Over the mantel the family arms were cut into the stone. Six windows deep in embrasures looked out on green lawns, a rose garden, and great shady beeches.

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The table was prettily laid with modern silver, and delicate French china; a silver epergne, in the center, filled with old-fashioned clove carnations, represented a stubborn defiance of Lady Adela's. The epergne, being frankly hideous as well as undeniably mid-Victorian, had been condemned by both Pamela and Anne as "too much." After each banishment, it had but waited a discreet interval to reappear, turning, so to speak, a flower-laden cheek to be smitten. Pamela, catching sight of it again, admitted defeat.

The butler, Parkman, and two footmen waited. To Harold Gaunt the old room bearing on its walls the portraits of his family, extended a splendid hospitality. The warmth of the fire, the heavy fragrance of the clove carnations, the faces of his aunt and cousins seated about the table, seemed like a welcome to what is dearest to an Englishman—his home.

As Gaunt looked at Viola, he fancied her eyes in meeting his showed sympathy for his years of exile, and a beautiful gladness at his return.

She did not look at him long, however, but opened an almost violently animated conversation with her aunt, in defense of some militants that had destroyed the contents of a pillar box. He was amused at her championship, watching her quick color, the light in her eyes, and the look of withdrawal and exquisite mystery, when she lowered them, and her long lashes curled against her cheek.

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A clear voice at his side interrupted these observations. He turned—to look at Pamela, who held his glance with small eyes, guiltless of ambush.

“I was asking if you would care to hunt with us to-morrow? The weather’s perfect, I think, and there’s a good horse for you.”

“I’d not thought of it. Do you all follow?”

“I do, not Anne. Viola, I don’t know about. Robert is too stuffy—he comes home to lounge about; worn out from everything *but* study. There are some people staying at Crawdon, next us, you know. They may join.” Pamela raised her voice slightly. “You’ll come? I think it only right for us to take an interest.”

Something in Gaunt, that had its being in a fact of his nature, resented this heightened tone, the hint of compulsion in her words.

He looked away from Pam. “I think I won’t, if you don’t mind. It will be rather jolly, just to get acquainted with the old place. And I have no mount.”

“There’s one for you. Vi, Harold could ride Deegan, perfectly, couldn’t he?”

“Why, yes—of course he could.”

“There! now you’ve no excuse!”

Harold leaned a little forward. “Will you ride, Cousin Viola?” And the masculinity that was a very strong trait of his character reveled in the initiative of his question.

Viola veiled her eyes—she did so to make no encroachment on Pam’s property. She could have

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done nothing to make herself more alluring to Gaunt. "I think not, Cousin Harold—I—must be busy. Letters to write—"

Anne listened in astonishment. "You! letters!—since when?"

Lady Adela looked long at the epergne, which represented her victory. And she remembered the tactics of her warfare. Submission—passivity—and then return.

She smiled at Viola: "My dear child, you are talking nonsense. Of course you will ride, to-morrow!" Pushing back her chair, Lady Adela stood up, after sweeping a spoon from the table with her napkin, and led the way to the drawing-room. Harold Gaunt was for once in his very polite life distinctly backward about opening the door. He went instead directly to Viola.

"Will you ride with me to-morrow, Cousin Viola?"

And Viola, lifting her eyes to his, smiled deliciously. "Thank you, Cousin Harold, I shall be very much pleased."

Lady Adela, before whom doors had always flown open as if by magic, when any Englishman was about, stopped in astonishment before her own door that remained closed. Turning, however, the look of surprise on her face faded. With a sigh, she opened the door herself.

CHAPTER IV

Melon, bringing Viola's tea the next morning, was forced to admit a radiant day. She put back the chintz curtains, and Viola saw the copper beeches glowing against a blue sky. The air, sharp and sweet, carried the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel, and the voices of the grooms and stable boys.

The meet was to lead off from Hatfield Heath, at ten o'clock, but the Honorable John Thornton, M.F.H., was to breakfast at Thorley.

Viola heard voices in the dining-room, as she went down, a little late. She had taken pains with her toilette—her hair still damp from the bath lay in charming but carefully arranged waves, under a smart black hat. She wore a black riding habit that had been made in London for Park riding, and her little boots were new, and beautifully varnished.

Pamela and Anne were already down and making excellent breakfasts. Robert was serving them from the buffet with cold ham, to top off the cereal, liver and bacon, and scalloped fish that was to reenforce them for the hunt. Lady Adela, at the head of the table beside an enormous, and to her, always alarming coffee percolator, watched the satisfaction of her daughters' healthy appetites,

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with the pleasure peculiar to a maternal parent. Harold Gaunt, in pink hunting coat and white breeches, sat opposite his cousins, and also noticed the appetites—and their satisfaction.

Pamela, wearing a habit of pepper and salt material, fitted so tight as to resemble a third skin, alarmed the young man; she seemed to him on the brink of bursting. Anne's clothes were quite large enough—you felt that they were suitable, well chosen. And her gray eyes looking out of a brown, boyish face, convinced one of her capability in any ordinary situation. One also felt that the ordinary situation would be all that she would have to meet.

As Viola came into the room, the M.F.H., a man of fifty, with sandy hair, and a look of enormous complacency, stopped in the narration of his difficulties in the village of Watching Tye. It was plainly going to the dogs. His estate of Rawdon to which Watching Tye was attached like an impoverished and undesirable relative, was not self-supporting, and the Honorable John laid his troubles before the Mordaunts.

At Viola's entrance, his offended throaty voice stopped in its recital, and Harold Gaunt, who had looked past him out of the window to the glittering lawn, got to his feet in a second. The Honorable John soon followed, but there was an odd expression in his prominent eyes, as he watched Viola—something greedy, and something wary, too, was there.

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As Viola took no breakfast and the others had finished and were chatting, a general move was made. Arrived at Hatfield Heath, and mounted on Eileen, who was quivering and restive, Viola turned her horse, after the bugle had sounded, in the opposite direction to that taken by the dogs and the hunters. The mare, her neck arched, her nostrils dilated and showing red, fought against Viola's determination, with fiery spirit; the cry of the hounds in full tongue, the rush of the horses, filled her with an eager excitement and actual animal rage, that a less experienced rider could not have overcome. With sympathy and skill, and by finally giving the horse her head over a sweep of meadow land, Viola got away from the others, and gave herself to the joy of the morning.

From the blue English sky a lark flung its notes, crystalline, distinct, pure as the air they melted into. The oaks that dotted the rich pasture land were burnished like copper and hung with a fine mist of cobwebs, through which they seemed to murmur and breathe, as all live things do, in the gift of light and air. From the cluster of trees in which she stopped, Viola could see nothing of Thorley, or any trace of human dwellings. Letting the reins loose on Eileen's neck, with one hand Viola took off the little Bond street hat, and felt for the damage done to her hair by the swift run. The pins had been shaken from it, and when the hat came off the heavy mass of it fell about her shoulders. Eileen taking a base advantage broke

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into a swift canter. Viola, her hat slipping from her hands, was carried out into the sun, her hair streaming about her.

"Damn!" said Viola, pulling up with difficulty.

A tall figure detached itself from a thicket. "I don't blame you in the least," remarked a well-bred voice, with every intonation of respect. "I've said it myself since I've been looking for you. You evidently forgot that we were to ride together?"

Harold Gaunt miraculously and undesirably appearing, came over to Viola. A tide of crimson swept her face.

"I don't think I *ever* said that before. It—it was jerked out of me—by Eileen. I haven't a hair pin—not one, they were jerked out, too!"

"I had no right here spying on you with the hateful pervasiveness of relatives. You had forgotten my existence yesterday, and to-day I interrupt your most private opinions. Forgive me!"

His blue eyes looked up at her with an imp of mischief dancing in them. As he looked, the imp disappeared.

"Won't you dismount? At least I can find your hat!" He took Eileen's bridle, but Viola, disregarding his outstretched hand, gave a quick jump and was beside him.

"I tried to give you a wrong impression, Cousin Harold. I always swear. Aunt has had a dreadful time with me. Pamela never does. If you don't mind, let's get in the shade."

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They moved forward, under a great oak. A little breeze shivered and whispered in its branches, and swung a spray of mistletoe above their heads.

“Do you mind, Viola, if I don’t get your hat, at once, and would you please sit just there?”

“Of course. But why?”

“I am going to lecture you. You’ve told me a fib to-day, and you acted one last night. You are not a Suffragette and you do not swear. Why are you trying to fool me?” His voice to his own ears sounded hurt, and angry. She was such a lovely, lovely thing, with her shining hair veiling her, and her dark eyes raised to his. The breeze gave an extra tug at the mistletoe.

Moving closer to Viola, he asked again: “Why, Viola, do you dislike me, and avoid me?”

“But I don’t—I didn’t.”

“Then admit, you are not a three bottle man!” He gave a short, eager laugh.

Lady Adela’s piteous face floated before Viola. She spoke slowly and precisely, trying to recall the precepts of militants.

“Don’t be absurd. I’m unfortunate enough to be a woman in England, but I take all the privileges of your sex—that I care to. As to liking or disliking you, why should I? I’m perfectly indifferent to all men.”

There was silence that throbbed, then Gaunt’s voice speaking gently: “You are indifferent always? Then you won’t mind this, will you?

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And it will give me a great deal of pleasure!"
Stooping quickly, he took Viola's chin in his hand, and bending his head, kissed her full on her mouth.

The mistletoe bough stirred in the wind, turned its pearly blossoms to the sun and expanded. Gaunt reached up and broke a spray from it. He offered it to Viola.

"One of my excuses—my—my—only one," he stammered.

For all of his effort of nonchalance, his breath came quickly. The touch of Viola's lips had been like snow that had left fire behind it.

"You will forgive me, Viola? You must—it was horribly cheeky."

The Honorable Viola Mordaunt had turned her back to her cousin and was braiding her hair with trembling hands. Two scarlet spots burned in her cheeks. The braid completed she turned to him. "Eileen, please." Her young voice was not quite steady. A hot wave of shame went over Gaunt. His instinct of the gentleman cried out at him. He brought her horse at once, and mounted her. The touch of the small boot, in his hand, made him feel a cad.

"Dear Viola, you must listen to me. I'm fresh from the plains. You don't know what that means. There have been four of us in Kairpur—four Englishmen, the rest natives. And the land is parched, like a man in fever, when it isn't rotting in the rains. I've had five years of it. And now—

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England—home—has gone to my head. I've been a lout, a fool—” He broke off angrily.

“Come,” said Viola, in a small voice, “if we are to have any tea, we must make haste.”

Gaunt flung himself on his horse and followed her.

“Do tell me,” she continued, “about that curious place—or rather about what you did there. Aunt said that you had the V. C.” She turned her head and looked him full in the face. “Is it given, Cousin Harold, for bravery, or for fool-hardiness?”

CHAPTER V

Turned towards home, the horses went well together. The swift motion of Eileen gave Viola occupation for her hands as well as her thoughts. Red spots still burned on her cheeks, but she was determined to treat this affair as a woman of the world would treat it. To be that, to present the polished surface of an accomplished mondaine, had been one of Viola's youthful and secret ambitions. And that ambition had been fired by her season in town. There she had seen and admired smart women, and elegant women, whose poised manner had reflected the appearance of their lives. They had been nice to her—not too nice, because they had enchanting affairs of their own that had their real interest, and which, in a subtle way, Viola had felt were quite unconnected with women. They had shown her a certain graciousness that had not been without challenge, and for that reason was potent. Viola longed to acquire the aura that surrounded her new acquaintances.

She had made an impression, Evelyn Malloring had insisted, on Ian McIvor, but the very real modesty that was Viola's had laughed at her friend. McIvor had been kind, sympathetic, but remote, surely, from her distressingly youthful personality. Viola hated the incoherence of her

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youth. It was evidently because of her childish appearance that Gaunt had dared to kiss her—hair down and all she had looked a kid. He should learn, if she could manage it, his mistake.

So Viola listened, demurely, after her first kiss, and stilled with difficulty many and surprising sensations.

Harold Gaunt, his blue eyes on her face, talked in a very un-English way. He was quite accustomed to doing his part in conversation, in fact, had often cause to regret a facile power to please, and attach to himself people in whom he had not the slightest interest. When that interest was held, however, he could be an observing as well as an animated young man; and he now understood Viola's precocious handling of the situation. He had seen young girls in India imitate the manner of older, and much admired ladies, and now, as then, he had known quite clearly that it was the manner and not the thing that made it, that was marvelously reproduced.

So he told Viola of his loneliness, of his hardships, of the time he had been wounded by a native that had run amuck. Of how he, Gaunt, had stopped, struggled with, and finally killed the man, after being stabbed, and had found some government papers on him.

Viola's imagination had kept step with his story. She saw the man, streaked with sweat, running in the white dust of the road, as a mad thing runs. She saw that flight checked, and two figures in the

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dust—a black hand with a knife poised, its swift descent, blood oozing, welling, pouring from its mark. The black hand raised again—but held. Another hand, white—red streaked—catching, forcing, breaking its hold—the gleam of the knife again, a cry, a figure of horror springing into the air—falling, collapsing, shuddering to the earth—lying there—still.

Viola felt enveloped by the fetid air of Kairpur. Through its clinging languor she saw her cousin, bending over and searching the body that he had slain. Searching it, touching it, till he found the papers, then turning, in the breathless air, and under the baleful sun to make his way home, alone, fainting, staining the dust with scarlet.

Gaunt stopped in surprise, for Viola had uttered a little cry and turned a white face towards him.

“What is it, Viola? Did something startle you?” He checked his horse and looked on either side of the country road. The afternoon was deepening towards its close, blue shadows mingled with the aspiring and acrid smoke of burning leaves. A crimson sun was dying in the heart of a pure sky that preserved miraculously its opalescent innocence. As Gaunt looked at the heavens, they symbolized to him what love might be in the heart of a young girl.

Viola’s voice, natural now, came to him. “Oh, it’s nothing, Cousin Harold—but how horrible! to kill that man—and how—did you get home?”

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“It was a nasty thing for him, poor beggar! But don’t waste your sympathy on me. It’s hazy in my mind about getting back to quarters—I had a go of fever, but all that was luck, don’t you see—sheer luck—it brought me home—that much sooner.” He let his eyes rest on her face that was not quite composed, and that held a delicate eagerness of pity.

“But who nursed you?”

“An old coolie—as long as my tobacco lasted.” Gaunt gave a short laugh.

“And then?” persisted Viola.

“My wound healed, the rains came, and the doctor with them. You have been more than patient—this can’t possibly have interested you, my beastly maundering about myself.”

“You made me see that place—you made me feel your loneliness, your isolation, the dead air, and the sickly rain.” Viola cleared her throat, with an odd little sound of decision. She stooped to her stirrup and touched a perfectly adjusted buckle. Under her long lashes a faint flush showed itself. “I can’t bear to think of you there ill, with only a coolie to see to you.”

The horses were on soft loam now, and going quietly like good comrades. Dense shrubberies made a dim twilight about them. Gaunt put out his hand and held the bridle of Viola’s horse, and the animal stopped at once, turning a surprised head.

“Viola, please, will my sins be forgiven me? I must know before we go home.”

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Viola looked up, startled. The manners of the admired ladies of London were forgotten. She was aware of Gaunt's presence, of the anxiety and intention of his gaze, as she had never before felt conscious of anyone's, except, for a mistaken moment at "Otello," when she had yielded surely to an over-stimulated imagination, and fancied McIvor in sympathetic accord with her tragic mood. But, raising her eyes now to her cousin's, she forgot that incident, as she had forgotten desired and imitated mannerisms of speech. Sincerity of expression shone like a light in her eyes, and Gaunt answered that sincerity. Dismounting, he went to Viola's side. A few rooks flying homeward made the only sound that broke the stillness of the green and exquisite twilight that enfolded them. Against the dark shrubberies Viola's white face looked like a pale exotic flower—but a flower surely with a soul.

"Little cousin—little girl—don't let me frighten you. Since I saw you last night, I've changed—I'm not the same man—" His voice, which had been curiously level in tone, broke, went on rapidly, "I'm not old—Viola—but ten years of my youth have been wasted—swallowed by routine; ten years of youth—think of it, Viola—spent in loneliness—and the plains. I've had my dream of love, of companionship—surely every man has had that! But it has been nothing but a dream. You welcomed me last night, Viola—you made me feel that I had really come home, perhaps without

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meaning it—but you did! You did—And to-day—” he drew an uneven breath, and moved nearer, but did not touch her. It’s like this to me, Viola. A nature that has never loved is like the waste places, the solitudes in which I’ve lived—abominable. I’ve been like them, but—I’m not that any more! You’ve made me different, already—in a day.”

A wave of emotion swept over him. He covered his face with his hands. He felt like a worshipper that had come to kneel, but had been filled with a spirit fiery, ungovernable, that had proclaimed itself through his lips. And by so doing had shocked, perhaps offended, the mysterious thing he worshipped. For it was the youth, the innocence of Viola that had kindled this flame, at her shrine.

Viola, astonished, shaken, looked at his dark head bowed before her. The sense of his nearness, his emotion, gave her an intolerable feeling, half pity, half repulsion. She put her hand on his hair, lightly.

Instantly he looked up. “You are not angry, little Viola?” His hand, strong and full of heat, took hers. At his touch that which had been pity in Viola vanished, and that which had been repulsion vanished also. She felt composure like a torn mantle slipping away from her, and she longed to grasp it and hold it together with some familiar and commonplace words. But they would not come. She took her hand from his, touched

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Eileen with her heel, and the horse, startled, indignant, sprang forward.

The bell for even-song from the church in Little Harley sent the sweet appeal of its voice to float in the evening air. The sound held a certain note of authority. The authority that lives in simplicity and in goodness and that makes a harmony of its own. As Viola listened to the old bell, her mood changed. She checked Eileen, and waited for Harold, and they rode home abreast.

CHAPTER VI

Left to herself Lady Adela had spent a delightful day, until four in the afternoon. At that hour, the servants, and especially Melon—who was now housekeeper—saw her enter her own room with relief. Because she was a good mistress, Lady Adela was an enquiring one; so investigations were rigidly conducted. Safe in her room, however, she had locked the door, taken a small key from a closed triptych on a Boule table, and with it opened, stealthily, a carved rosewood chest that contained childish souvenirs and photographs, which had been repudiated by her adult but by no means mature family.

Selecting a particularly offensive picture of Pam, mercilessly represented with her fair hair strained from her high forehead, and her pale eyes stony above a smirking mouth, Lady Adela dived again amongst her treasures, and brought up this time a photograph of Harold Gaunt. Placing the two young faces next each other, Lady Adela had sunk into a comfortable chair, and yielded to her imagination. Her face relaxed into lines of contentment but rarely seen on the faces of those who dwell exclusively in the bleak regions of reality.

She saw Pam regarding her fiancé with a look of girlish admiration—she saw that deepen to a fond

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and doting expression, not perhaps to have been easily achieved by Pam, but justified by its object, Harold, wrapped in the reserve and majesty of the British husband.

A knock on her door brought Lady Adela, a rejoicing grandparent, untimely from the christening of their first son. Rising reluctantly, she passed her handkerchief over her face to remove from it any lingering cathedral expression.

Clarkson waited with three cards. Lady Mordaunt, flushed, with hair untidy, looked at them, took them with a sigh and immediately felt guilty of inhospitality.

“I’ll be down at once, Clarkson,” she announced firmly.

“‘Lady Malloring,’ ” she read, “‘Mr. Ian McIvor,’ and—really! how very extraordinary!”

Over the third card poor Lady Adela exclaimed:

“How very extraordinary! ‘Madame du Guenic.’ ”

And then Lady Adela’s imagination, after giving her pleasure, froze her with fear; the syllables she spelled were only too familiar, but had been consigned to the Limbo, where the ghosts of family skeletons walk forlorn, but hopeful of a resurrection of the flesh.

Moistening her dry lips and putting a hand that further disarranged her hair to her head, Lady Adela entered her own drawing-room with decision.

Lady Malloring, victimized by a dressmaker devoid of conscience, came towards her, heavily

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upholstered in a rich material of a really terrible shade of green. Her large hat supported a forest of feathers, through which one glimpsed brocaded fruits, gilded vegetables, and was led to hope for *Paul and Virginia* in their earthly paradise.

Lady Malloring, as happily unconscious of being badly dressed as she was charmingly so when well turned out, took her hostess's hand.

"This is an avalanche, Lady Adela, but don't be unduly puffed up, or unnecessarily cast down. We are really calling on your cottages—"

McIvor came forward and interrupted. "Please, Lady Mordaunt, it is quite true that my interest is deeply centered on the present condition of the workingmen in dependent villages, and that yours have an unusual record of usefulness and prosperity. It is also true," he smiled down at her, "that you would delight me if you would let me go with you into Little Horley and see the methods and condition of the people. But—" his voice deepened, "I must be frank, my visit is social, and I'm hoping you'll let me stop to tea."

Lady Adela concealed her surprise. While in London McIvor had called several times, but it had seemed to her nothing more than the politeness of a young man to one of the season's generous hostesses. She had thought of him as a caustic and brilliant person devoted to disturbing sociological pursuits, and attending her parties even from a sense of rigorous and unsleeping duty towards his fellowman. From these vague impressions Lady

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Adela sought the reason of his coming, while she made all her guests welcome, with very real hospitality.

Mme. du Guenic, born Hortense du Prez, eldest daughter of Baron du Prez and only sister of Julie, Viola's mother, was an accomplished *femme du monde*. Though she was now approaching her fiftieth year—that year which seems to toll a bell in the lives of frivolous women, and to set a definite limit to that frivolity—her rather full erect figure, dark hair, and brown Latin eyes, languorous, yet full of light, expressive, as well as receptive, gave out to the world a personality full of power to attract. She was counting on that power to help her now, in the desolate time of her life. If it could secure for her the companionship, for awhile at least, of her niece, Viola, she felt that her own connection with youth would be renewed; that her being would be refreshed at the well springs of life.

Viola's birth had been to this woman a tremendous affront. The only fact that had enabled her to bear it with any inner composure was, that for the new life which had been given another had been taken. She had made at the time no attempt to see the child, but had heard, with infinite relief, of its reception and adoption into the English family.

But that had been years ago, when she was young and had not been alone, had not known of the waste places of the soul in which no voice

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but that of self is heard. She had lately heard that voice and she was afraid.

To Lady Adela, Mme. du Guenic presented a delicate but suggestive surface—the graceful and charming talk of a woman of the world, with the subtlety of a proffered intimacy.

Poor Lady Adela, who had lived in dread of this event for many years, until the last, and had endowed Viola's maternal aunt with the repulsive attributes of those who can take from us what we love, felt remorse for the mental injustice she had done, and in her anxiety to make amends, met Mme. du Guenic more than half way with cordiality. And in so doing armed her adversary with a knowledge of her own simplicity and goodness.

"You must be very tired, all of you." Lady Adela addressed her guests with a fluttering sigh. It did seem too much, to be caught alone with this astonishing trio.

Lady Evelyn, with her *flair* for a situation, had immediately sensed one, and was aflame with curiosity. Drawing McIvor to the window in pretense of admiration for its disclosures, she tried by the use of interrogative and raised eyebrows, and a repetition, in the voice of a conspirator, of the words, "The French aunt—The Faubourg, San Germain," to share it with him. He became, however, merely irritated and bewildered.

Seeing the two that were, for her purposes, decidedly *de trop*, engaged together, Mme. du Guenic turned a handsome shoulder towards them, and

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fixed her brown eyes that held the light of a Madeira wine upon Lady Adela. Her low and beautiful voice took another quality—the proffered intimacy that had been in it, deepened to confidence.

“I have so often thought of you in your English home—so longed, and yet feared to present myself. You might easily have felt it an intrusion—you may feel it so now. There are things between us that are impayable. But there is also Viola—”

Mme. du Guenic pressed her hands together, the rings on them cutting into her flesh. She continued, speaking rapidly.

“You took her at first, out of charity—it was generous—it was noble of you! In Paris there were sore hearts that secretly blessed you for that. I thought of Viola on her saint’s day, when she was a child, with yearning, but also with shame, and that was my sin. I have been punished for it. You are a happy mother—Ah, I know it. Your children are with you—my husband and my only son are dead. I am quite alone.”

Lady Adela gave an incoherent murmur of pity. The French woman made a gesture, as of one accepting possible, and even welcome sympathy.

“My home is closed—now. I am quite free—living *sur la branche*. I have come to beg from you—from your generosity. Let me have Viola, if she will come to me—for six little months. We will travel—Paris, Vienna, Rome, Sicily—it may amuse her! I know them like my pocket. And

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then back to you. Ah, I should be thankful—grateful beyond words. Please!"

Lady Adela, painfully conscious of the rigid attitude of attention taken by Evelyn Malloring's back, touched by the appeal made to her humanities, and overwhelmed by the thought of answering that appeal, greeted the diversion made by tea, with eagerness.

The two at the window were obliged to come over, and the talk became general. McIvor guided it safely, if a trifle didactically, amongst the dwellings of the slate workers in Glas Ogven.

Mme. du Guenic listened to him with delightful sympathy, interjecting, while she watched his face, expressions of interest.

Lady Adela, vastly relieved, was able to find out from Evelyn Malloring that permission had been granted for the opening of a bazaar, the proceeds to be given to a little band of devoted men and women who were taking their religion (incidentally it was Lady Adela's religion, too) to northern India. Once arrived with it safely, their intention was to insist, with of course tact, on its adoption by the natives. So that those who went now unashamed in nakedness and beads might wrap themselves in embarrassment and calico. Lady Adela was very pleased that the bazaar had received royal sanction; she sought Lady Evelyn's evasive eye to express her satisfaction.

But at that moment Viola and Harold Gaunt came in, together.

CHAPTER VII

It was ten months later. A golden afternoon dreamed itself away in Nice. From the terraced and enclosed gardens of the Villa Atalanta, Viola sat and watched the sea. Two books were beside her, on a small tea table—one a volume of the sonnets of Ronsard, open at the one beginning, "*Cueillez des aujourd’hui les roses de la vie.*" Tennyson's "Princess" held an envelope that marked, "Tears, idle tears." As she had read the verses, Viola's eyes had been suffused with tears. She had been obliged to put the book down.

Orange trees in bloom, and standing in green painted tubs, breathed their fragrance into the air that was cooled by the spray from a fountain fashioned in Italian marble, and representing a stout and charming child controlling a sea monster. Water gushed from the mouth of the fish, sparkled in the bright air, and fell into a mossy pool with a delicate and musical sound.

On the terrace below, oleander bushes bloomed—their rose-colored flowers vivid against the silver gray of olive trees.

From her place Viola looked out over the detail of the garden and the white palm-bordered *Boulevard des Anglais*, its shops and casinos, to the land-locked Bay of the Angels. The water was

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of that blue that suggests the ideal of beauty to an impressionable mind—beauty of the sea, of the heavens, of a soul. It was profoundly still, so still that where the water seemed to meet the sky the two were like one ether. Some fisher boats, their lateen sails bright flecks of color on the blue, lay idly waiting for a breeze, but the fishermen sent their songs across the water.

And in this calm Viola tried to lose herself—to let her mind find peace.

Mme. du Guenic's plea had been heard, had proved itself to Lady Adela not only a blessing in disguise, but almost an answer to prayer. Viola had gone to her aunt at once, with an ardent admiration for her very unusual attractions, and by so doing had felt herself nearer that dear romance of her life, her mother.

Lady Adela, after a week of indecision, had the unusual but delightful experience of obeying at the same time the voice of conscience and the voice of desire. For with Viola's departure with Mme. du Guenic, Pamela and Anne had been given their chance; they would no longer be outshone in their own home, and after the fashion of lesser lights when a greater is withdrawn, they made a very charming glow of their own—a glow suitable to hearthsides. And Lady Adela, in spite of a very real longing for Viola who had always been a sweet and sympathetic companion to her, could not help a feeling of satisfaction at having her girls' young faces no longer compared with Viola's.

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Mme. du Guenic had been entranced with Viola's beauty. She enjoyed the admiration and envy it aroused as much as though it had been created by the possession of a unique jewel. To be guardian and aunt was an entirely new sensation.

There had been wonderful shopping expeditions in the *Rue de la Paix*. The weary voices of dress-makers and mannequins had uttered their ecstasies, with a note of sincerity surely refreshing to their own souls.

The Faubourg had opened its doors, if not its heart, and Viola had sat through rigidly formal dinners given to her aunt, with a great deal of discomfort. The curiosity felt about herself, though by no means evident in the manners of any of Viola's new acquaintances, was however so active in their minds as to make her feel that she was suddenly and for them obligingly made of glass. Their surprise and interest had been for her remarkable and lovely resemblance to her mother. Viola had felt it called forth by some youthful *gaucherie* of her own.

Mme. du Guenic, often amused at Viola's sufferings, had told her kindly that she lacked confidence. And with the delightful anxiety of youth to please where it admires, Viola tried to enter into her aunt's by no means simple life, with as little disturbance to it as possible. And she did very well. For six months Tante Hortense felt pride, amusement, affection of a comfortable quality in her presence; also, a profound sensation

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of personal nobility, strange and a little oppressive. These periods of gentle melancholy descended usually upon Mme. du Guenic, after she had been made the confidante of some youth or man infatuated with Viola. There is no age at which some women can bear the praises of others. Instead of linking her with youth, Viola placed her definitely amongst those whose day, of a kind, is over. Once more the hand of jealousy thrust itself into Viola's life.

One evening at the end of the six months, Viola was sitting in a bedroom of her aunt's house on the Boulevard Haussemann. She was enjoying the luxury of solitude at the hour of Ave Marie. The scent of lilac, rising from the freshly watered and enclosed garden, distilled itself through half-opened blinds, and from the street came in a strong but untrained tenor's "*Un peau d'amour*," sung with the enthusiasm it deserved. The little tune with its wistful refrain and graceful plaint suited the delicate sentimentality of her mood. For Viola had received that afternoon an offer of marriage. It had come from Ian McIvor in Glas Ogvén. It lay, with a sort of dignity, in her lap. Its simple, rather grave expressions of devotion, had not disturbed Viola with any vehemence of passion. McIvor seemed offering her rather gracefully, but certainly with no desperate ardor, the most important place in his life. And he let her know that it was a life of importance to many. Viola read it twice, then slipped it into its envelope.

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Tante Hortense, coming in before dressing, put the lights on rather crossly.

She had spent the afternoon, fruitlessly, at a reception given by the wife of the Danish minister, who had made a discovery of some South American musicians. The musicians had been placed in a remote conservatory, but had got out of control, and ruined all talk.

"It was banal—odious." Mme. du Guenic shrugged. "I was obliged to take tea—I couldn't simply sit and be deafened, while a bore screamed at me." She straightened her handsome but broad shoulders resentfully.

"At your age all things are possible. At mine—an extra wafer makes one thing inevitable. I do not wish to end my life describing a circle."

Mme. du Guenic, denying herself the luxury of sitting down, in penance for the wafer, stood over Viola and noticed the letter in her lap.

"Ah, mail, I see. That reminds me. The excellent Aunt Adela is on the eve of a great happiness." Tante Hortense's brown eyes shone wickedly.

"Do tell me?"

"It is the large daughter—the one with the substantial nose, and I've no doubt, character. She looked so thick to me." Mme. du Guenic mused pensively. "I'm sure she's solid all the way through. At any rate, a husband has been secured, or is about to be secured. What's his name—Gaunt—Gaunt—?"

"Harold Gaunt?"

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"That's it. Not much of a *parti*—but they seem very happy about it. Your cousin will write you, when things are settled. This of course is in confidence. Tell me, what was your news?"

Viola did not answer at once. She was feeling like one in whose face a familiar door, the door of home, has been closed. Her aunt moved impatiently, and Viola managed a small voice:

"Why, it's—it's nothing, Tante Hortense, at least, you may read it, if you like. I'm sure Mr. McIvor—would expect you to. For you are my guardian now, aren't you?" Tears struggled in that small voice, but Mme. du Guenic ignored them.

"Of course, child, of course, you must show me your letters. McIvor? Didn't I meet him? Tall—dark—cottages?"

"Yes," said Viola. "Cottages—and slate quarries." She gave the letter at once.

Mme. du Guenic read it, very carefully, then she looked at her niece with an appraising eye.

"He wants to come and see you here. Why not let him?"

"Why, but Tante—he would expect—he's in Wales, you know."

"What of it? Let him come—and we shall see."

With a sudden and sweet smile, Mme. du Guenic pressed the girl to her for a moment. Viola, unused to any demonstration, received it, however, with gratitude. Held by her aunt's arms, enfolded surely by her love, Viola felt herself

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protected, no longer alone. And she longed to give obedience to her protector.

Four months later Viola Mordaunt and Ian McIvor were married quietly from the Boulevard Haussemann, and went to spend their honeymoon in the Villa Atalanta, at Nice. As Viola watched the sea on the day of their arrival, McIvor was in the town making inquiries for facilities that would enable him to receive mail daily. His absence from Glas Ogven had come at a particularly bad time. The demands for higher wages from the slate workers had reached a pitch of insistence no longer to be ignored. And McIvor was the last man to thrust serious things, no matter how uncomfortable, from his mind. But the problem he was faced with was, briefly, this.

The rate of production and sale from the quarries at present and for the last five years had fallen below the output for wages. If McIvor closed them down, men that were unfit for any other work—and men for whom he felt himself in the capacity of landowner responsible—would be deprived of their means of existence. On the other hand, if he granted their demands at a still greater personal loss to himself and kept the men on, he would feel himself guilty of yielding to pressure, and by so doing pauperize the workers, take from them one of the inalienable rights of man that the laborer be worthy of his hire.

As he made his arrangements for messenger service, McIvor's heart ached for his villagers—

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thick-set, tawny men and women, in his comfortable new cottages, out of which they had made cosy homes for red-faced babies. That the entire village was at present concentrated on him with hatred and furious demand for a very large share of his own income, disturbed McIvor, only as a source of anxiety for them; even on his honeymoon their distresses weighed upon him, and he wished that Viola and he could be with them at once to help.

A plan of teaching them intensive farming, of leasing them the land necessary for such experiments by some arrangement that would make it possible, if the venture were moderately successful, for them to repay him. Such a procedure would reconcile them to the land again—Viola and he would live useful lives among a contented peasantry. McIvor longed to leave this place of idling and to take his wife to his home.

As he left the Bureau de Telegraf (where he had uttered his careful, painfully correct French, with an incisive and Britannic accent, to an attentive Swiss who, after listening patiently, responded in glib English), McIvor took his way through the town. The people on the small, palm-bordered pavements interested him as humanity in the mass always did.

American, French, Swiss, an occasional African, strolled with cosmopolitan indifference. Smart women and men in motors flashed by, and over the hill to hidden villas and the Cafe de Paris opposite

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Monte Carlo. An Italian band, in the Place, played "L'amour est un ouiseau rebelle," with the long enduring "Santa Lucia," to a drifting but complacent audience. In the bright sun, the light dresses of the women—the gay colors of their hats and parasols, accented by the occasional dark coat of a man—the air of carelessness with which they lounged or strolled, struck a note that was not harmonious to McIvor. To sit in the sun, when it was not too hot, to listen to love songs, to go, later, and gamble, those were surely the acts of the people he was among.

But Viola had longed to come here. As he thought of her McIvor's rather pale face flushed, and a feeling of which he was ashamed came over him. If he had obeyed his impulse, he would have hailed a dilapidated but hopeful *cocher* that had been following him, and been driven at once to the Villa Atalanta.

But he did not yield. Ascertaining by his Baedecker two possible ways of approach to the Villa, he chose the longer of the two, and falling into the stride with which he was accustomed to cover English miles, he started to walk there.

And he put his mind on the problems of Glas Ogven, and resolutely kept it there.

Alone in the garden, Viola watched the hours slip away. When it was six o'clock her own maid, Leone, a French girl that had been with her in Paris, and who was puffed with pride and curiosity at coming with "Madame" on this interesting

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journey, appeared with tea and a *brioche* on a tray. Her white face wore an unnaturally respectable expression.

Viola declined the tea, but picked up her shady white hat and walked down the sanded path to the house. Leone supplicated.

“What gown to-night, Madame? The white Callot? Madame *est exquis* in white!”

Viola hesitated. “Really, Leone? I want to look well. You think the white?”

“*Oui, Madame, oui, certainment!*”

“Very well, then, you may put it out.”

A veil of deeper blue seemed drawn over the bay and the sky. They withdrew behind it. Pale lemon-colored lights sprang out in the casinos, and larger golden globes pricked their outlines at regular intervals, from the street lamps. Nice was stirring to its activities of the night. But it was exquisitely still in the garden. Viola looking up saw a great tremulous star above her. A childish rhyme came into her head, and she spoke the words aloud:

“Star light, star bright,
Very first star I see to-night,
I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish to-night!”

For some reason the last line of the simple couplet was very difficult to say. Viola faltered. The star and the wish of childhood seemed equally far away. Presently Viola heard McIvor’s voice in

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the house asking for her. A feeling of constraint, of terrible shyness, came to her with the tones of it. It was impossible for her to answer him—she longed to hide herself in the shady and scented mystery of the garden. But McIvor, inquiring from Leone, came out onto the path. He had been walking rapidly and a lock of dark hair clung to his forehead. It gave him an unusual expression of youth. Viola noticed it at once, and some of her diffidence left her. McIvor, seeing her white figure, came up at once and Viola turned to him. He made a gesture as though he would take her into his arms, but she moved, or he fancied she had—and he did not. They did not kiss in the garden under the luminous star. But Viola spoke to him at once.

“It is so lovely here, Ian, I’ve not half seen it. Perhaps, to-morrow, we can explore it together—our own little demesne, I mean. After that there will be excursions to make into the country—and—” she laughed. “I want to indulge a rooted but sinful desire—”

“Viola—sinful—you!”

“I’m not sure it’s wicked—but I know I want to. It’s very banal—to seasoned travelers, but the idea excites me.” She put her hand on McIvor’s tweed coat, and her voice sounded like a child’s coaxing. “Wouldn’t it be fun for us to go to Monte Carlo—and—risk a little?”

McIvor laughed—then pulled his brows together.

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“You ridiculous child! Do you think I would let you go into that atmosphere? The place is full of riffraff. Besides, we may not be here so very long.”

“Why, why not? Did you have bad news?” Viola took her hand from his arm, but her voice no longer sounded like a child’s.

“No, dear, nothing new. But you know I am worried about my people. It’s a very bad time for them. I feel we should be there, not idling in this place, where people seem to have very few responsibilities. His voice had a faint edge of contempt. He put his hand on Viola’s to lead her towards the house.

“Must we go in, Ian? You’ve not even looked at our view! I think there’s a dear small moon hiding behind those cypress trees. Don’t they call them the fingers of the Madonna?”

McIvor’s hand became insistent. “Let’s go in, dear—I’ve a great deal to talk of to you. We must make plans.” He drew her to him as they entered the house.

“I have—a wife—a companion now,” he whispered against her hair.

Viola, looking up, saw that his eyes were full of tears. A curious thought flashed through her mind—it was like the swift flight of a bird, seen for a moment against an infinity of sky. Viola did not speak her thought, but it was this:

“And I, have I—a lover?” But the thought passed as a bird does, and they went together into the house.

CHAPTER VIII

There was a wooden pavilion, painted green and red, that could be reached by opening the French windows of Viola's sitting room, descending some outer stairs, and taking a few steps along a yellow sanded path, bordered with wallflowers. Breakfast, or rather coffee with rolls and honey, had been taken there by Leone, at nine o'clock, and placed on a round rattan table, covered with a white cloth. Leone arranged everything carefully, touching the heavy white china with its simple design in green delicately and as though it were precious. After immense pains with the serviettes, she converted them successfully into two open and symmetrical fans. Regarding these with satisfaction, she stepped into the garden, selected two exquisite and almost perfect white rosebuds, and laid them, with a sentimental glance, beside each place.

McIvor interrupted these ministrations. He gave Leone a kind "good morning," in his rather deep but very pleasant voice, and asked if she could find him a morning paper. Leone departed, amazed but submissive, and soon returned with a copy of *Le Temps*, two days old. McIvor accepted it gratefully, however, and immediately began to read it. After reading two leaders, whose contents

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he already knew, McIvor became conscious of the flight of time and an aching void within himself. A continental breakfast seemed a poor thing at best and not to be borne at its worst. McIvor touched the little coffee pots with his hand and found them quite cold. The butter had taken on a dissipated and jaded appearance. McIvor drew his brows together, stepped into the garden path and called.

“Viola! Viola!” Receiving no answer, he took out his watch, and by a glance at it felt himself justified in irritation. He and the breakfast had been waiting half an hour.

Putting *Le Temps* down in the pavilion, McIvor started off for the house. At the door of Viola’s sitting room he encountered Leone, whose white face at sight of him became alive with curiosity. McIvor resented the curiosity.

“Where is Madame?” he asked curtly.

“Why, but M’sieur, not here! surely in the garden—surely with you!”

McIvor restrained his temper. He was amazed to find that it needed restraint over such a trifle.

“I’ll look in the garden.”

Leone flew before him. “Perhaps, this path, M’sieur, it leads to those trees—it is mysterious! Madame would like—”

“Never mind, Leone—I’ll go. Thank you.”

The path indicated as mysterious wound away from the house, towards the crest of the hill. It

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was carefully sanded, as were the other paths, with bright golden grains, evidently selected for their beauty. In his haste McIvor scattered them. After a ten minutes' walk between beds of pink and blue hydrangea, red roses, white and red camellias, the cultivation of the garden gave place to a sylvan and delicate wildness. Grass sprang up in the path, cypress trees, trimmed, massed their dark and shadowed foliage against the soft green of wild olives. Here and there great rocks, covered with moss and lichen, shouldered their gray outline against the sky. As he gained the summit of the hill, a glade opened before McIvor. Through the low growing branches of oak trees, linked together by chains of ivy, the sun diffused a golden light. In the center of the circle was an immense rock. Ferns and wild grasses had found a foothold in its crevises, and on its summit perched a small boy. He was dressed in rags that fluttered and fell away from his thin brown arms, as he held a pipe to his lips and played upon it. A little, haunting air crept out—thin, elusive, an elfin thing.

The boy's eyes were shut, and his thick curly hair uncovered.

A gray squirrel, his little head turned on one side as though he were listening to the tune, sat so that the boy could have touched him. Near the rock, but quite motionless, stood Viola. She was dressed in a dark brown corduroy skirt, quite short, that showed high walking boots, a loose short jacket, a

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white blouse open at the throat, and a white felt hat with a scarlet quill in it.

McIvor, at sight of her, was conscious of an immense relief, and also of the fact that he had been very badly treated. It was a small feeling, but resentment often comes to one who has been made unnecessarily anxious.

“Viola!” His voice had more than an edge of impatience. It had also quite the effect of legerdemain on Viola, the flute player and the squirrel. The two last vanished like a puff of smoke, and his wife gazed at him in amazement. But almost at once her face broke into smiles, and she ran up to him.

“Did you ever see anything so adorable as that little boy? Don’t you think he’s a faun? I came up early and when I first saw him in this delicious place it was like finding one of Corot’s inspirations. Don’t you envy artists, Ian? I mean, of course, real artists that spend their lives finding beauty for the world?”

“Naturally, Viola, civilization owes a debt to artists. But to my mind it is not a pressing one, and art is often used as a mantle for things that are far from the only beauty that is of real importance—”

“The *only* beauty, Ian?”

“You interrupted me. I meant, of course, what is obvious to you. The only beauty that can be of great importance to any one—is that which concerns their—” McIvor hesitated and then did

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characteristically what he disliked doing; he brought out the word, "souls."

"I see," murmured Viola. "You mean, of course, something splendid."

She was conscious of a strange embarrassment as McIvor discoursed, reluctantly but firmly, about that deeply personal thing, a soul. Viola felt as though she had been guilty of an impertinence; almost at the same time she remembered the breakfast waiting in the green and red pavilion, and though quite aware that it was not *en rapport* as a topic of conversation with their present unexpectedly exalted one, she broached the subject.

McIvor responded with alacrity and they were soon seated opposite each other. Fresh coffee was brought, and presently a packet of mail. With a hasty excuse McIvor became immersed in his. Viola received two rather characteristic messages —one a long but almost incoherent letter from Lady Mordaunt, full of kindly but rather sentimental platitudes, selected evidently as appropriate to the occasion. Towards the last of her letter, however, she forgot the occasion and became natural.

"It is very dull, dear. There is no one at Harley, and we have hardly had any week-end parties since you left. The young people seem very much engaged. Harold Gaunt, as you probably know (this last was heavily underscored), has gone back to Kairpur. I have given Wimbish, the

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foreign missionary we are sending to India—a dear good man he is, too—Harold's address. The dear boy may have some *comfort* (also under-scored) from him."

Lady Mordaunt then subscribed herself, rather abruptly, as "Your affectionate Aunt."

Viola read the letter more than once, then let it fall from her hand. She looked out through an airy aperture of the pavilion that was framed in white jasmine to the blue freedom of the sky.

McIvor, finishing one letter, glanced up. He was eager to tell his news. Eager to make plans for leaving Nice. He imagined in Viola the existence of all the traits that he fancied he admired and desired in woman. He credited her with a superiority over foolish sentimentality that needed repetitions of a once proclaimed devotion. He knew her to be sympathetic, gentle, womanly, in the tenderest way to himself. He imagined her capable of exerting those qualities in the larger interests of humanity. He believed her extraordinary physical beauty held a rare flame of the spirit that burns for others.

McIvor was not, at this time, selfish. He made the frequent mistake of the humanitarian, who ignores the one he could help for the many that he cannot reach. Viola needed to know that her husband loved her, not that he wanted her support and interest in his affairs.

So again, McIvor spoke of Glas Ogven. By leaving the Villa at nine the next morning, they

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could be in Paris in the evening of the same day, spend the night, cross from Calais in the morning, reach the Castle by night.

“Could you do it dear, packing and all? We are really needed badly!”

Viola did not answer at once. Her gaze was still on the blue. McIvor noticed that one letter lay unopened at her place. He touched it with his slim, strong hand. Viola took the letter from him with a start and Lady Adela’s effusion fell to the ground.

“This is from Tante Hortense, Ian. Do you want to know what she says?”

“Of course! but you haven’t answered me.”

“About leaving here? Why, yes—just what you say. It will be simple enough to be ready.”

McIvor rewarded her with one of his rare smiles.

“Thank you for that! And now the news—won’t you read me your letter?”

He settled back in his chair and watched his wife. Her little white teeth were pressed on her lower lip, and as she looked down at the letter in her hand her dark lashes made a shadow on her small face. She looked extremely young, and at the moment rather sad. McIvor noticed it, but thought it the effect of her coloring and her spirituelle type of face. He wished, however, rather vaguely that she would look up.

Viola did not. She read Tante Hortense’s letter, at least the first part, aloud:

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“My dear child:

It is a selfish thing for me to intrude my voice into your paradise, but perhaps the thought of me and other Parisians shrouded in rain and fighting influenza will make your lot that much brighter in comparison. I am willing to let you picture me in the last ignominy of immense handkerchiefs and a lonely hearth. If I in my turn could have a line that would say how it is with you—”

Viola stopped reading aloud here, but the note was not finished. A tardy, and half maternal qualm, as well as a real curiosity, had evidently made Tante Hortense their prey.

“You are a dear child, little Viola—you deserve happiness. You know now whether you have found it. I will know when I see you. Stay as long as you can in the villa, dear—have a good holiday. Perhaps in another month I might run down to Mentone—

“Will you mind seeing me very much? If so, I shan’t be offended, but will stay in my corner, and understand.”

“Ian, how long have we been married?”

McIvor started. “My dear, what a question! All of four days—you didn’t know!”

Viola stood up, but she did not raise her eyes. “I’m going in now—to see about my packing.” She spoke rather gravely, and turned at the door of the pavilion.

“I did know about our marriage, of course, Ian. I wasn’t quite sure, but now I am—”

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McIvor watched her slim figure as it moved away slowly.

“Sure of what?” he wondered, then gave a short laugh, that held a note of tender indulgence.

“Four days or four years—there is no essential difference, after all. There will be, please God, ties and responsibilities added to us—but already—Viola and I are a family!”

A sensation of profound satisfaction pervaded McIvor, as he voiced his thought aloud. He was in a splendid physical condition, and now that he was to return to Castle Conway, felt himself able to meet and master the difficulties there. Being a family man would, perhaps, give his opinion more weight with the villagers he longed to influence. Pacing up and down the terrace on which the little marble fountain played, McIvor thought of Viola as mistress of his home, with warm pride. She would make an adorable chatelaine, and a kind and friendly patron to his poor. He could almost see her stopping in one of the lanes of Glas Ogven, by a honeysuckle hedge, to speak to a child—perhaps pick the little thing up, and at an anxious invitation from its proud mother, see her enter the lich-gate, cross the bare threshold, and sit in the ingle nook for a cup of tea from the copper kettle. Or presiding at their own table, in the immense oak-panelled dining hall of the Castle they would often be alone, as McIvor thought with satisfaction. Once a week the Robinsons would come, and once a fortnight the Macreadys from Dhin Dhu.

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And after a while possibly, perhaps, surely, Viola would understand his efforts at a democratic relation with the tenants, and beginning with the mothers and children have them up for a jam tea.

As he imagined small feet marching with strict decorum through his big rooms, a new thought came to McIvor. It was of a room in a turret, whose windows watched the ocean from all sides, and around which the sea winds sang. The walls of the room were hung with faded tapestries from the Mabinognion. Geraint, in the forest with the white stag, and the face of Enid looking on her lord “with meek blue eyes—the truest eyes that ever answered heaven.”

On the stone floor was a very beautiful rug that had been placed there when the room was closed. Near the door that opened into what had been McIvor’s mother’s sleeping room, was a wooden cradle, of carved oak. On the wall that faced the east hung a silver crucifix of exquisite workmanship, and underneath it was a worn *Prie Dieu*—that was all that the room had held for nearly forty years—but McIvor’s thought filled it with a delicious vision.

He put his hands in his pockets, and moving one foot back and forth in the path, scattered the golden grains of sand.

“Jolly little beggars—children!” he said aloud.

CHAPTER IX

In the morning and from the window of their carriage, Viola said good bye to Nice. She gave a small boy, who was trying to create a market for some atrocities, in the shape of baskets covered with woolen oranges, and with the name "Nice" written on them, the immense sum of five francs. His astonishment that broke into smiles of joy and a pretty gesture of gratitude, made Viola glad for the opportunity of her kindness.

McIvor watched her with amusement. "You will spoil him, utterly—he will expect the same from other travelers and be disappointed."

But Viola put her hand out of the window and waved to him. "I have an odd feeling that I will come back here some day, Ian, and it will be good to see a friendly face."

"You like the place?"

"I love the south—I feel a sense of—let me borrow a southern phrase here and call it '*dolce far niente.*' Sometime, Ian, may we go to Italy?"

McIvor looked down from some rugs he was arranging. He was dressed in a black and white tweed suit that fitted his tall and slightly angular figure closely, and as though he were accustomed to it. There was nothing in his attitude or appearance to suggest that prodigy of interest—a return-

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ing bridegroom. Though McIvor succeeded completely in looking and behaving like a man who has been married for a period of years, he did not look as though he were married to Viola.

There was something youthful, untouched, in her rather wistful glance, as she looked up at her husband. He did not answer her question, but made her and himself comfortable with magazines and papers.

The road-bed was rough and the carriage rocked with a sickening motion, as they emerged from one tunnel, to plunge into another. Viola did not read, and soon gave up her attempt to watch the country, and in so doing became the prey of hateful and insistent thoughts.

She was returning not only from a journey into a land of languorous sunshine, dream-like seas and skies, but from a great adventure of the soul. The end of that pilgrimage had not been reached in the Mecca of spiritual attainment, or even found in the exotic garden of the senses. Viola knew herself to be like one wandering alone in a wilderness.

The trip to Paris was interrupted at the frontier by two almost passionately important guards, who relapsed into human beings on receiving McIvor's just if not generous *pourboire*, with his assurance that neither Viola, Leone nor himself were concealing jars of jam or boxes of cigars about their persons, and were about to depart when a *douanier* looking fiercely interrogative, insisted on a thorough search being made in their compartment.

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Viola and McIvor were obliged to submit, and were turned out with Leone on a platform. After much rummaging there was a shout of exultation, and the *douanier* held up a small box triumphantly. He then invited the passengers to return to their places.

“Viola! M’sieur!” he exclaimed, thrusting the box, with its outer cover removed, but a layer of green leaves over its contents, almost into McIvor’s face. “What a loss! The good Father Descoings left this treasure, but telegraphed us to search, as he will follow later.” Raising the leaves carefully, he displayed several rows of neatly packed snails.

“*Enfin! Escargo!*” he called triumphantly.

Arrived once more in Paris, they went at once by motor to the Ritz, and were given a suite facing the Place Vendome. It was nearly ten and McIvor advised dining in their rooms. Viola longed to go down into the brilliantly lit *salle à manger*; she wanted to feel life about her, to be distracted by strange faces, but she was determined not to have time for Tante Hortense—that lady had admitted herself to be possessed of too observing an eye.

Leone, miraculously revived by her arrival in Paris, looked disappointed at McIvor’s decision, but as Viola agreed to it, began laying out things from the dressing bags.

Viola bathed and slipped into a white negligee, and after a somewhat silent, but very delicious dinner with McIvor, she drew back the heavy velvet curtains, the lace ones, unfastened the *volet*

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de fenêtre, and looked out into the Parisian night. It was very clear, but evidently sharp, as pedestrians, and even people leaving or entering motors, were well wrapped up. The trees on either side of the avenue held up attenuated and naked branches to the brilliantly-starred sky, as if in fruitless but inevitable supplication. As Viola watched the street she felt herself mentally removed from the room she was sharing with her husband, and she wished to prolong that sensation.

McIvor, tired after the day's travel, threw himself on a couch. From its cushions he watched the outline of Viola's white gown, the shadow of her dark hair against the rose colored curtains. She was so still that after a few moments McIvor roused himself and spoke to her.

"We make another early start to-morrow, you know. Hadn't you better think of bed?"

Viola turned from the window reluctantly. "I was thinking of my—of my mother. She was a French woman—a Parisian. I told you about her—before we were married."

McIvor stirred slightly, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Whenever I am in Paris—I imagine my mother—living here. Driving in the Bois—taking part in the gaiety—admired for her beauty—having her following—" she broke off, with a little half laugh.

"I even go to early service with her, at the Madeleine—Paris seems to hold her for me."

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There was a short and rather constrained silence. Moving from the window into the lighted room, Viola wished she had not spoken so intimately.

McIvor did not break the silence, and after a few moments, Viola spoke his name. He did not answer, and she went up to him. His tall and strong figure was completely relaxed—his head turned on one side showed an uncompromising profile against the cushion. His breath came regularly from slightly parted lips. As Viola watched him an almost ironic expression crossed her face. She bent over him but not near enough to wake him.

“You’ve gone to sleep, but you won’t have dreams,” she thought. “I was telling you mine—but you didn’t listen. You won’t ever understand them.”

For a moment her eyelids stung with tears, then she moved quietly to the bedroom, took a comforter from her bed and covered McIvor carefully. One of his hands slipped down from under the cover. As she touched it his eyes opened.

“Viola! what in the world!”

“Nothing, Ian. You dropped off—and I—”

“You were tucking me up—like a baby! How absurd of me—it’s not eleven yet.”

He got to his feet with difficulty, struggling in the folds of the quilt. Viola did not help him.

“I’m tired, too,” she said, going toward the door. At the threshold she turned. “Good night, Ian—you will have me called in time, won’t you?”

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“Why, yes, dear, but are you really going now? I feel quite refreshed.” He gave a short laugh. The thought that he had asked a good deal of his wife, in giving up the villa to take this hurried and tiresome journey, had just occurred to McIvor. He had felt that she understood the need of it, almost as much as he himself—but now a faint doubt crossed his mind. Was she really tired, or had he offended—hurt her?

“Then you may sit up,” she responded, gaily enough.

McIvor came up to her, bent down and kissed her.

“Good night, Ian.” Gently freeing herself, Viola entered her room and closed the door.

CHAPTER X

The next day, after fifty minutes of acute misery for Viola on the Channel, the McIvors arrived at the Savoy. A brief rest there, and they were again on their way, speeding through Gloucestershire. Viola watched the parklike landscape, dotted with oak trees and marked with well-tended hedges and cultivated fields, give place to the green and rolling country watered by the Thames and Severn, and the blue line of the Cotswold Hills.

Leone was amazed and indignant at what seemed to her a deliberate choice of discomfort, and when a hurried change was made at Liverpool to a steamer of the North Wales Company, she bore herself as one upon whom the last indignity has been heaped.

McIvor looked at her white, disgusted face with amusement, knowing what was in store for her. He hoped that Viola would send the French woman home of her own accord, when she reached Castle Conway, and take a village girl. Something in McIvor resented the sophistication of the little Parisian waiting upon the innocence of his wife.

On the sloping and soon violently-agitated deck of the small steamer, Viola felt again the creeping wretchedness and enervation that is by no means the easiest type of *mal de mer* to endure. McIvor,

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who was a splendid sailor, secured her a deck chair in a sheltered corner, tucked her up carefully, and with an admonition to stay as she was, delivered in an unconsciously hearty voice, he left her.

A fine rain, almost like mist, was falling from low-hanging sulphur colored clouds. The water that rose in long swells about the boat was a sickly green, and looked swollen, as a monster in disease might look. A heavy smell of oil mingled with the odor of frying food. There were few passengers. McIvor, glad of the opportunity for exercise, walked at a good pace around the deck. He wore a green cap, with a visor pulled well down over his eyes, and as he walked his mind was alert, quick with plans for his people. His rapid steps, as they passed Viola at regular intervals, made a rhythmic accompaniment to her otherwise formless thoughts.

As Port Penryln came in view, McIvor stopped by his wife's chair, and roused her to look at the Harbour.

“See, my dear, we're nearly in. I want you to notice—nearly all of this traffic is carried on for slate.” He pointed an eager and instructive finger towards the harbour and its activities.

Leone, who had emerged from the lower and mysterious regions of her berth, like something dead propelled automatically, was arrested by his remark. Her small and bead-like eyes, from which all life had gone, stared stonily.

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Viola, making a tremendous effort, stood up and tried to be interested.

“Is it all from your quarries, Ian?”

“No, none of it—we have our own shipping point from Port Madoc. This is the beginning of our real journey. You will be in Wales when we land, but you will not be in Glas Ogwen until to-morrow night.

McIvor’s cheerful and resonant tones were those of one who was making a pleasant announcement, and it was pleasant to him, to show Viola the familiar sights of his native place.

“*Mon Dieu!*” came from the parted lips of Leone, in a tone of despair.

Viola turned to the poor thing. “Never mind, Leone, we will soon have a good rest—there’s an hotel here, isn’t there, Ian?”

“Yes, very fair, we’ll go right to it.”

An open motor, driven by a thick-set, dark man, dressed in a faded mackintosh, carried them from the dock into a narrow cobbled street. A keen wind was blowing, and as Viola looked up the steep slope of the hill they were mounting, she saw an immense medieval fortress black against the murky sky. On either side of the street narrow stone houses evidently sheltered some life, as a dull glow from lamp or fire shone out occasionally from behind closed blinds. A cold and clinging mist had taken the place of the light rain, and seemed to issue like the breath of the town from the stone buildings and rise like an exhalation from the street.

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The driver of the motor, beside whom Leone was sitting, proceeded without words or inquiry up the hill to the frowning walls of the castle, then turned abruptly down a side street and stopped before the faintly illuminated sign of the Royal Goat Hotel.

Chilled and almost numb with fatigue, Viola stumbled, and would have fallen as she left the car had not McIvor steadied her with a firm hand. Leone, who had sat sphinx-like until the driver had offered her an immense hand clad in a huge woolen mitten, shrank from him, uttered a shrill "*Non, non,*" and bounded with amazing vitality to the pavement. Safely there, she crept to Viola, as one who seeks sanctuary.

The dining room of the "Royal Goat," though bearing witness by its long table, with the cloth spread and a double row of napkins in rings to a sufficient clientele, was quite empty of guests when the McIvors were ushered in by a butler of immense dignity and splendid calves.

The room was long and narrow, with melancholy mustard colored paper on the walls, and a single suspended oil lamp that seemed to sway as it cast its sickly light on the not quite clean cloth, with its meek and uninviting preparations for the morrow. The floor was stone, covered with strips of a mild green carpet. On the walls hung four engravings in gilt frames: "The Stag at Bay," "The Last Hope," "Windsor Castle" and "The Lakes of Killarney." A white, air-tight enamel

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stove concealed within itself some small sticks that were not dry. The evidence of this was a diffused odor of wood smoke.

McIvor seated Viola and raised his brows at her quizzically from across the table.

“You will try to take something, won’t you? Hot soup—something?”

To Viola the whole room seemed to be swaying with the dreadful roll of the sea. The thought of food in this melancholy place was unbearable. A slice of cold mutton, a preserved pear checked her denial. Looking over them to her husband, she found him attacking his repast with enthusiasm. McIvor met her eye with authority.

“Take it, my dear, this is traveler’s fare,” he smiled at her quite kindly, and very carefully began “making” talk about the neighborhood in which they were. Of the college, with its three hundred students, and its departments of agriculture, mining and sciences, from whose gorse-covered hill a glimpse of Snowden could be had—of the first Christian Church founded when Anarand was King of North Wales, and from whose rood-loft a figure of the Virgin bearing a holy cross had fallen upon and killed the insistently supplicating wife of Stylyt, Governor of the castle. Of the revenge taken on the holy figure by the outraged villagers, by throwing it into the sea—of its final arrival on the beach, at a distant and jealous town—of its burial there, with an inscription over it.

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"If I remember correctly, it goes like this." McIvor closed his eyes and made an effort of the mind. Very soon the odd words came to him:

"The Jews their God did crucify,
These others their's did drown,
Because their wants she'd not supply,
and now lies under this cold stone.'"

Viola, pushing her plate from her, gave a short laugh that did not sound as though she were amused.

"Poor woman, what an answer to prayer! She might well have thought, '*Je ne sais pas a que c'est que la vie éternelle, mais c'elle est une mauvaise plaisanterie!*'"

McIvor looked up a little surprised and displeased at Viola's quotation and tone. Rather awkwardly, as he drew her chair back, he said:

"You know, dear, our people are very religious—it goes deep with them—"

Viola interrupted—it seemed to McIvor as though she had not heard him.

"Let's go—I'm so tired."

At the door of Viola's bedroom—large, high ceilinged, hung with funeral draperies—McIvor paused a moment before following his wife. He wished that she would speak to him, assure him that she wanted him with her. As Viola did not, however, but slipped at once into a small chair drawn up by an open fire, Ian assumed the elaborate indifference that the really shy wrap themselves in, and began examining some small

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books that Leone had put out on a little table by the bed. Two of them were a girl's books, two were not: Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," Sir Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake," "Thomas a' Kempis," and a charmingly bound and illustrated copy of the "Rubaiyat." Selecting the "Imitation," McIvor turned to a favorite passage of his own.

"This is fine, Viola, isn't it?"

"The Love of Jesus is noble, and spurs us on to do great things, and excites us to desire always things more perfect... It makes us desire to be at liberty and estranged from all worldly affection, lest its inner view be hindered, lest it suffer itself to be entangled through some temporal interest, or give way through mishap—,"

As he read the indifference left McIvor's voice, and a note of strong sincerity rang in it. For the first time Viola felt that she had listened to the inner voice, the real voice of her husband.

"How true that is!—how easy—how pitifully easy to be distracted from our work—to give not our best effort, but the little that is no effort at all, and that we only give after our own selfishness has been satisfied."

"Do you mean, Ian, that we don't give to charity?"

"Charity, no, Viola, how I hate that word! I mean that we don't feel the interest in others that we do in ourselves."

"But if we did! Surely, we might risk being thought intrusive."

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“That’s it! Of course, you *are* thought intrusive, meddlesome, crazy, by the very people you are trying to help. I don’t mean, Viola, the interest *in* others that might be felt by a male gossip—I mean the interest *for* others that every man of responsibility should recognize. I mean that, speaking personally, it would be far more comfortable for me as well as our people at Glas Ogven, to let them go on as they are, with added wages that they don’t earn, than it is going to be, to shut the quarries down and try to have them make a go of farming.”

“Won’t they suffer, Ian, if you do that?”

“For a time, perhaps.”

“But we have plenty of money!” Viola got up quickly. “I have more than I need! Perhaps the quarries will do better if we see them through another year!”

“My dear child!” With a distinct effort McIvor checked his impatience, and moved away from Viola. “You’re tired now. You can’t have understood me at all! I’ll say good night and we can talk of this when we are at home.”

Left alone in her bedroom, Viola sat quite still for a few moments and closed her eyes, in the hope that the floor, walls and furniture would become stationary, for they seemed to sway with the sickening motion of the sea. Presently, when she looked up the movement had ceased, and Viola was conscious of a slow drip, dripping from the eaves of the house. Her room was a corner one,

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overlooking the street, nothing was heard then but the sound of an occasional pedestrian on the pavement below. But the footsteps were not many.

As she got up to ring for Leone she noticed the "Imitation" opened at the passage McIvor had read to her. Picking the book up, Viola read further, and as she did so was conscious of a tightening in her throat, of a desire for tears. The beautiful words did not seem to her the expression of a remote theology, or the admonition to walk alone through the earthly life.

"Love feels no burthen, regards not labors, would willingly do more than it is able, pleads not impossibility, because it feels sure it can and may, do all things. It is able, therefore, to do all things, and it makes good many deficiencies and frees many things for being carried out—when he who loves not faints and falls down."

Viola felt, as she read, as one who is freezing might feel if they looked across a distance to where a great flame rose to heaven. Without calling Leone, she got into bed, put out the light and tried desperately to sleep. The bed clothes seemed damp, and gave out a musty, penetrating odor. The small fire had not burned away, but cast grotesque shadows on the floor and over the furniture.

After what seemed hours of lying quietly, there was a sound of footsteps walking rapidly in the corridor—a door opened sharply, and a vague

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hubbub of voices escaped. Raising herself in bed Viola lit the candle and strained her ears. Presently the footsteps were audible again—they walked rapidly to her door, and Viola heard the heavy timbre of McIvor's voice interrupting the lighter and hurried speech of some unknown and evidently agitated man. After a few rapid questions and answers, McIvor knocked softly on Viola's door, immediately she answered him, and almost at once he was standing at the foot of her bed.

He looked very much excited, and not in the least as he had looked when Viola had not grasped his sense of man's cosmic obligations. He seemed sure that she would understand him now.

"My dear Viola, I'm very sorry to disturb you—but—there is urgent need. I'm going to ask you to dress—just slip on something dark and warm, if you have it, and I will wait in your sitting room to explain."

Without a word, Viola obeyed him. The room was very cold, and as she moved about trying to find her things with only the candle and fire to light her, she struck sharply several times against the furniture—but in spite of the difficulty in dressing without Leone, in an incredibly short time to McIvor, Viola was ready. She was dressed in a dark blue serge, with a simple white collar, and she had done her hair low at the back of her head.

Her big eyes were wide with astonishment, but she did not question her husband, only stood waiting for him to speak. Just before he did so

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there was a curious cry from the end of the corridor. After it died away—and it was not loud—the air seemed to throb, to palpitate. McIvor grew quite pale. He took Viola's hand.

"It's this, Viola. A chap I know, he has been curate at Dhin Dhu, for the last sixteen years, is taking his wife home—she's English—home to Devon. She was ill when they started but, well, she wouldn't wait. They've literally starved on their living, I'm afraid—and they've seven children to see to, seven and another coming—and, poor souls—nothing ready! The only doctor that lives here can't be located—Macready's almost crazy. They've sent out for a nurse, but it's late—she doesn't come—and it's terrible to think of that poor woman all alone." McIvor passed his hand across his forehead and listened, but his eyes never left Viola's.

"But—but her husband's with her, Ian?"

McIvor threw out his hands. "A man! and a terrified one! What use would he be! I've promised to walk him about—" again McIvor paused, listened, "keep him going till it's over. If you would go to her, Viola—she's a lady, you know!"

Viola turned away rather sharply. "I wasn't thinking of her social position, Ian, but how can her husband leave her?"

"But, my dear, he's never stayed—she prefers—not! It's too shocking for him. I tell you the man's unnerved now!"

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Again the odd little cry struggled out into the corridor. Every vestige of color left Viola's face, but she moved decisively.

"I know nothing, Ian, nothing—but at least, as you say, I'm a woman—"

"Good! Come, my dear, this way!"

Warmth glowed at McIvor's heart, for he had known one moment of doubt.

At the end of the corridor they almost stumbled over a gentlemanly figure, in clergyman's dress, that was pressed against the wall, with two large, well-formed hands held to its ears. At sight of Viola the figure became animated—the Reverend Macready grasped her hands without ceremony. His large, pallid and distressed face relaxed piteously. Viola was afraid he was going to cry.

The reverend gentleman tapped gently on the door, opened it gingerly, and in a shaking voice, announced, "Mrs. McIvor, Dora," to the unseen inhabitant.

Then the two gentlemen linked arms, and after begging to be sent for when there was news, walked rapidly away.

Viola hesitated on the threshold. A faint voice had replied to its lord.

"I'm sure it's very kind of her, John dear. Now you won't mind leaving me—till the doctor comes. I'm easier now—quite all right." The small voice had finished heroically, if somewhat abruptly. As John departed down the passage, however, it spoke

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again—it broke on the words of agony, “My God—my God—how much *longer!*”

Then Viola went in quickly, and closed the door.

CHAPTER XI

It was morning when Viola came out of the Macreadys' room. There was even pale sunshine that looked as though it, too, were exhausted from the rigors of the night. Leone had tidied things—had found some valley lilies and put their white, waxen flowers and delicate green leaves on the writing table with a morning paper.

Dr. Alan Joyce, who had come to the hotel about four in the morning, came in with Viola. He was a man of fifty, of middle height, heavily built, with thick, dark hair and a grizzled beard. He wore spectacles, and his clothes had never been pressed since the day he bought them.

He seated Viola carefully, looked about for the bell and rang it. When it was answered by an astonished-looking boy, he ordered:

“Coffee, two cups, please, and without cream.”

Then he moved away from Viola, and picked up the paper. The sheets gave out the peculiar smell of printers' ink, and crackled as though they had been starched. Viola watched him as he read—watched his large hands as they folded the pages deftly.

“I always make such a wreck out of a newspaper, Dr. Joyce.”

“They are not made for ladies' hands, Mrs. McIvor—they soil you.”

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He looked over his glasses kindly at Viola, but she avoided his glance. The coffee came, a fire was lit, and presently McIvor, looking pale and disheveled, came in. He went at once to the doctor.

“What an appalling thing, Dr. Joyce. I know you did all anyone humanly could. Macready fully realizes it. But to be left, as he is, with young children—” McIvor cleared his throat. “She was a young woman, too!” he added.

“Yes,” agreed Dr. Joyce. “She was a young woman. And a brave one.”

“But to die! Why, she spoke quite cheerfully to her husband, just as he left her the last time. I heard her voice.”

“Then that is a good thing for him to remember.” Dr. Joyce got up heavily.

“I will be back later—and if you will take my advice, Mrs. McIvor, you will get some rest.” The door closed behind him.

“Yes, Viola—you must be worn out. I’ll go—”

Thrusting his hands in his pockets, McIvor began striding up and down the room. His imagination, usually under excellent control, was in a state of rebellion. It scourged the complacency of his accepted views of life. That women suffered when they gave a new life to the world, he of course knew. But they soon, and gladly, forgot their hour of pain, in the joy of their children. They went down, unafraid, for a moment of darkness, to emerge triumphant into the light of

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mother love. Men knew this, and were able to accept it, knowing that their gift of a child to the woman they loved, was the crown of her womanhood. Surely that was so. But Macready's wife had died. She had gone into the darkness—and she had not returned. She had been tortured. And Viola had seen that agony—had perhaps comforted it. What it must have been to see, to stand by, and watch the little creature suffer, endure, be overwhelmed! McIvor remembered Dora Macready perfectly. She was a small, fair woman, with soft, appealing blue eyes, and a complexion that got faintly pink when she was spoken to sharply. Macready had sometimes done that—he was a good fellow, but the noise the children made irritated him, and he naturally enough would call to his wife.

But he loved her, of course, and she had left him. McIvor found himself thinking resentfully, "She chose to leave him—women are not supposed to die—she could have fought harder!" He even formed the words with his lips.

Viola spoke to him: "What is it, Ian? What are you saying?" And McIvor felt the blood rush to his face.

"It's—nothing, Viola—I am thinking of Macready—and you."

Viola stood up. "I was not thinking of him. If you don't mind I will rest a little."

Unconsciously, McIvor waited for Viola to speak to him, to tell him something of her initiation into

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the mystery of woman's terrible hour. He longed to be reassured, to hear that this tragedy was exceptional, but Viola's words, "I know nothing, Ian, absolutely nothing," came back to him. She had been ignorant, and he had sent her in to knowledge. Had thrust her, without warning, before revelation. And his imagination that pictured Dora Macready as man's victim, pictured Viola with her.

He covered his eyes for a moment. His temples were throbbing, and he felt like a man in nightmare who assumes griefs that are not his own. His common sense stirred, protested against the injustice of such thoughts. Viola had done what was right, what was womanly, had obeyed her own heart, and not his request. She was his comrade, his helpmate, not an exotic to be sheltered, protected from all the realities of life. And he would have acted basely towards her had he treated her as one.

McIvor recalled the night that he had met Viola, and the feeling of depression that had flooded him, as he looked at the wintry London sky before he went into Lady Malloring's. He had felt conscious of impending calamity, almost as though words of warning had been whispered in his ear on that night—and he had gone in, to meet Viola, and thus proved that mood absurd, as this was. He would drown the voice of hysteria and morbid introspection that told him Viola's innocence had perished as Dora Macready and the

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little child had done. He would still that voice with Viola's assurance.

He looked up, but she was no longer in the sitting room. Walking resolutely to her door, he turned the handle. Leone appeared in the aperture. Her black eyes burned with malice. She raised a clever and somehow unscrupulous-looking finger to her pale lips.

“Madame sleeps, M’sieur, she is exhausted—she asks—that you will not disturb her—”

“But surely, she is not asleep, already?”

“M’sieur, can judge! after last night!”

Leone put her hand on the inner knob, and began slowly to exert a slight pressure on it.

At once McIvor stepped back and the door softly closed. The answer he had longed for had been given him by the lips of the French maid.



CHAPTER XII

The next morning the McIvors went on. The pale sunshine of the previous day that had contended feebly with the native mists, succumbed to them, and was further obliterated by angry gusts of rain, driven by cold blasts from the sea. The windows of the railway carriage were hopelessly blurred, excluding even the faintest glimpse of landmarks McIvor longed to point out. Emerging from the long tunnel into the country from which, on a clear day, one may see the Menai Bridge, Ian made a fruitless and somewhat absurd effort to clear a tiny space of window glass, for Viola to peep through. As she saw his disappointment at being unable to exhibit this prodigy of engineering feats, Viola was conscious of astonishment at the trace of boyishness in her husband. The length and thickness of the supporting chains was imparted with *empressement*, and the name of Telford spoken in a tone that asked for a responsive exchange of admiration.

Being possessed of a nature that clamored to give always what was asked of it, Viola did her best to be appreciative.

“It is splendid, I’m sure—the rain is too disappointing. There’s something—a rhyme, I think—”

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“My dear Viola, a rhyme?”

“Yes—O, what is it?”

“I heard him then, for I had just
Completed my design
To keep the Menai Bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine!”

“That’s it! What a lamb Lewis Carroll was!”

McIvor tried to smile indulgently, but the interest had gone from his expression, and he looked reserved and withdrawn into himself. He did not attempt to show Viola anything more, nor even to talk with her. As she stole a glance at him from her corner and the book she had picked up, Viola felt repelled, almost as though she was physically chilled by his detachment. She also felt as though this journey would never end—that it might be broken into again by another tragedy, arrested in some dreary twilight of unreality, but that a final destination would never be reached. The sound of the train merged with the uproar made by the angry water of the Sient and Menai Straits, as it flashed by the gray walls of Carnarvon.

At Afon Wen the door of their carriage was flung open, their luggage gathered up, and they themselves changed into a car of the L. N. W. R. Veils of gray mist seemed to unite the waters of the harbour with the lowering heavens, from which torrents of heavy rain fell, as though it were being shaken out of a bag by an angry hand. A semi-

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circle of beach along which clouds of sand were driven, was headed by an esplanade.

As McIvor settled their things into place, he wanted to tell Viola how beastly he thought the weather was, and how responsible he felt for it. As he looked at her delicate little face, framed in the dark fur collar of her warm cloak, he was again assailed by doubts. Perhaps she was only a child, a beautiful, unawakened fairy whom he was brutally subjecting to reality. But he knew now that he could not ask her the question he had been so ready to last night, any more than he could deplore to her the discomforts of their journey. For the first time in his life McIvor was afraid to know truth. And in his fear was something chivalrous, delicate, to his wife. It was his refusal to believe her less true to a fine conception and ideal of life than himself.

Twilight came swiftly, came as the culmination of gray through which they journeyed. At Glas Ogven they left the train. Huge cliffs towered above and behind the little village, that was menaced by the sea on one side, but protected on the other by an embankment built by McIvor's great grandfather across the estuary to reclaim the Traeth Mawr.

Leaving the train to enter a carriage, piled high with warm rugs and drawn by two horses, Viola's impression of dream and unreality deepened. The evening sky was obscured with vapour, except for a thin line of pale lemon color in the west against the

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farthest horizon of the ocean. Its effect was melancholy—a light to expose darkness, not to dispel it, and in whose sad prescience the gray slate cottages of the village seemed broken bits of rock fallen from the giant cliffs above them.

The horses broke into a quick trot on the uneven road that began at once to ascend. On one side the Conway slipped with slow whisperings between its mossy banks that harbored clusters of columbine, spotted foxgloves, and birches that gleamed delicately white against the dark water. Very soon the horses began to strain at the traces, as the road grew steeper and beset with rocks, whose jagged outlines suggested the ferocity of wild beasts. Through an occasional opening in the barrier of granite, Viola had glimpses of an immense sweep of gorse-clad plain. A cold wind blowing from the great spaces bore a salt tang, a scent of heather and bracken, and in its voice, the infinite sad sound of the sea.

After an hour's riding, McIvor longed to tell Viola they were approaching Trevwithin, and that on the plain below was the slate quarry. But the keen wind that braced and welcomed him as it stung his face, had made Viola draw warm wraps about her until even her head disappeared beneath them. Leone, her spirit completely broken, collapsed upon the impersonal shoulder presented by McIvor's driver.

At last the horses stopped, and their feet rang upon stone. A torch flared and writhed in the

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night air, lighting the gateway of the castle. Viola, roused by McIvor's voice, looked up at a frowning tower that bore low on its face sinister slits for defense. Above them, the figure of a saint, in a niche—to the right and left, turrets rising above the walls.

In answer to McIvor's call, a man's figure sprang out, the gates drew back, and the horses drove quickly into the courtyard and up to the castle. A pool of light fell on the stone stairs. Mounting them McIvor drew Viola into a great hall that was filled with a strange sound. Taking her to a window, he flung it wide. Below them was a sheer depth of cliff, and a whispering, mysterious expanse. And the sound that filled the castle, that breathed like a presence in the great rooms, was the infinite sad sound of the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

It was hot in Kairpur. The white light of a brazen sun beat down on the gray dust of Harold Gaunt's compound, and onto the roof of his dâk-bungalow, and put long fingers between the green shades. Mrs. Lathrop's bearer, seeking admittance, looked with envy but also with hope, at Gaunt's tall figure stretched out on a cot under a moving punkah. With a profound salaam, Kali Bagh awaited attention. He was beautifully oiled, his turban was immense and his dhoty immaculate. To bear small notes had never been without profit.

“Hazur.”

Gaunt, who had been asleep, looked up, reached in his pocket for money.

“You have something for me?”

“Gee-ha! hazur.”

Kali Bagh extended his mistress' letter delicately. Gaunt took it, bestowed largess, said:

“Tum—jane—sucta.”

Whereat the bearer salaamed again and departed.

Possessed of the letter, Gaunt seemed in no hurry to read it. Instead he packed his pillows behind his head with a practiced hand, lit a cheroot and looked idly at the plaster ceiling of his

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room, that was washed a faint green, but on which brown stains were encroaching.

He looked older than he had when staying at Thorley. A sharp attack of fever from which he was just recovering had left its mark, in the pallor of the face, in the bistre shadows under the eyes, in his relaxed and emaciated figure.

The small room with a cot in the center was utterly bare, except for two straight chairs, a table, on which was an untidy heap of papers and magazines, several months old, and, as always before the rains, flies droning, buzzing, their fat black bodies, lethargic and torpid, striking the windows. After nearly half an hour's contemplation of these surroundings, Gaunt drew out Mrs. Lathrop's note, opened and read it. Then he struck a match, and holding the thin paper between two hands that were transparent against the flame, he burned it. When it had been converted into a tiny quivering and blackened heap, he dropped back on his pillows, uttered a fervent "Damn!" and went to sleep.

Mrs. Lathrop, in her pretty drawing room, hung with chintz and ornaments from home, was waiting Kali Bagh. She was a little woman, nearer forty than thirty, and India had made parchment of her face, and had written on it many things that Mrs. Lathrop thought known only to herself and two, or at the most, three others. She was blonde, with rather light blue eyes, and she dressed excessively well, for the wife of a man in an

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inconsiderable position in the Civil Service. But perhaps she had money of her own. She was at present, and in her way, in love—absorbingly, fearfully, inconveniently infatuated. Perhaps the end of worry about financial matters, which had been very bad, indeed, had something to do with it; perhaps the new interest and activity that she had found and exerted on Gaunt's behalf when he was down with fever had more to do with it; perhaps the knowledge of her husband's approaching return from his unattractive district had the most to do with it. At any rate, Mrs. Lathrop, to use a slang expression, was decidedly not her own man. When Kali Bagh, who walked as one having infinite leisure, made a languid appearance, his mistress questioned him sharply.

The Sahib received the letter, but had at once dismissed the bearer, giving no answer.

“Did he—?”

Then Mrs. Lathrop checked herself, before falling into the enormity of talking with natives, and went into her own room, which was light and attractive. The bed and dressing-table were of wicker, and the latter held in a large silver frame a picture of her husband that was only slightly flattering. From it one could not tell whether he was a short man or a tall one. But Mrs. Lathrop knew, and did not look at it. Instead, she threw herself on the neatly-made bed and thought of Gaunt—and cried a little—the kind of tears that come silently and swiftly, because the trouble that

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they spring from fills the whole mind, and speaks aloud when there is no one to hear.

When the light no longer came through the broad leaves of the teak-wood trees into her bedroom, but had moved on to a frangi panni tree that hung heavy-scented blossoms that seemed to give out the breath of the East, over the garden wall, Mrs. Lathrop got up, dressed without looking at her poor face that had red lines on it from being pressed into a figured bed-spread, and began putting things into a dressing bag. Then walking as delicately as Agag, she left her house, threaded through the garden, called a *ticca-gharry* that had been resting in the shade of a building till the sun was low, and was driven through the dusty, baking streets, almost to Gaunt's bungalow. She preferred to walk the short distance to the compound, and up to the porch, and did so without mishap.

Gaunt's *punhah-wallah* had deserted, and only the flies droning heavily were able to see Mrs. Lathrop as she came up to Gaunt. He was still asleep, with a little pile of ashes and a burned match left untidily by his side. Seeing that Mrs. Lathrop smiled, and began putting things to rights. She was not light on her feet, and Gaunt wakened when she moved a chair.

He lay quite still watching her.

“Celia!”

Mrs. Lathrop started, and dropped a book she had picked up. It lay with its leaves crushed under it, and Gaunt frowned both at the un-

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expected sound and because he was fond of the book.

“Hal! That stupid bearer did not bring any answer—I thought I—I would come for it myself—or perhaps, you did not have my note at all?”

Her eyes begged of him. Gaunt looked away.

“Are you turning out for the dance, to-night, little woman?”

“Surely, you are not well enough to go?”

“I’m better, much. Thanks to you. I’ll be leaving for home at the end of the week.”

Mrs. Lathrop came up to Gaunt’s cot slowly, getting down on her knees beside it, and took one of his hands between her two that were moist and cold.

“You don’t know how I care for you—I oughtn’t to say this, I know, but I don’t care for anything else—only you—”

“Celia, little woman, don’t and please get up.”

Gaunt tried to free his hand but could not without being rough, so had to leave it.

Mrs. Lathrop’s voice, which was husky, hurried on: “Please, Hal, surely you’re lonely in this place—I could make it all comfy—and cosy—I’ve brought my things—and you know he’s coming home.”

Gaunt put his arm about her.

“But, dear, I’m leaving—and perhaps, it’s not as bad as you think. Perhaps, he will make you happy this time.”

“Happy!”

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Mrs. Lathrop stood up, her cheeks burning, and her breath came through her nose.

“Do you know what it is to belong to some one who knows nothing about you? Whose habits irritate you—whose talk bores you—who thinks you love them when their touch sickens you—who takes your virtues for granted, and only speaks about your faults? You don’t know because you are a man—and a man is free—I want to be free, too—I’m sick of pretending.”

Mrs. Lathrop’s chin began to quiver, and the ever ready tears to stream down her cheeks. She was not playing the game cleverly, or even tolerably, but it had ceased to be a game to her, and she flung away her pride so that Gaunt might believe. She did not stop to think that the sight of naked truth may be repellent. She did not think at all—she gave herself to emotion, and was betrayed by it.

Gaunt got up from his cot and looked out of the window to give her time to compose herself. He was tingling all over—chiefly with irritation. Though he could not see her distorted face, the sounds of grief were sincere and penetrating, and he knew that she was looking at him with eyes that were far from lovely.

“Don’t pretend, Celia, that is beastly.”

“Well, then, what?” There was hope in her voice.

“Why, tell him—tell him how it is with you. He’s not a bad chap.”

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“You mean—tell him I care for you?”

“Good Lord, no! Celia, you don’t—you’re nervous, worn out, little girl—this climate does for everyone. Go back and talk to—to—Lathrop, and then go home for a year.”

“When do you go, Hal?”

“There’s a P. and O. boat leaving from Calcutta in a week’s time. I can make that.”

“And if I made it, too?”

“Would that be wise, my dear?”

“How prudent you are for—for me. You didn’t use to be like that. Have I done anything to make you angry?”

“The Lord give me patience.” Gaunt spoke under his breath.

“Of course not. But I have to think for you.”

“I don’t want you to think—I want you to—”

Mrs. Lathrop went up to Gaunt and put her arms about his neck. Through the window she had seen Mrs. Godwin, upon whom Kairpur depended for information of its fellow creatures. Mrs. Godwin had on a huge hat, and had come into the compound to give Gaunt’s *Syce* a jar of Cross & Blackwell’s—for his master. But the hat was not so large that Mrs. Godwin had not had a clear look into Gaunt’s sitting room, and Mrs. Lathrop’s face, before she turned and almost ran from the place, taking the Cross & Blackwell with her.

Mrs. Lathrop dropped her arms. “She saw us, Harold.”

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“Who saw us?” Gaunt whirled around on his heel.

“Mrs. Godwin. She has gone now. It will be all over before the dance this evening.”

Mrs. Lathrop drew away from Gaunt and sat down on one of the hard, straight-backed chairs. Her figure drooped. She looked small and wretched. And the damage was practically done. It was beastly lonesome for the poor little thing in her bungalow—it wasn’t exactly gay for Gaunt in his. She must have taken him seriously, always, even about a kiss or two that had seemed natural, but—not important. She liked him—she wasn’t afraid of showing her feelings—and she wanted him. After all—this was India.

Gaunt went to Mrs. Lathrop, and put his arms about her.

Later that night, Mrs. Godwin, unknowingly, spoke truth.

CHAPTER XIV

Lady Adela and Pamela were sitting in the morning room at Thorley. Pamela had a large basket piled with small but heavy garments within reach, that she was systematically reducing by taking up, examining, repairing, and putting aside. Her large, capable hands moved with decision about their task. She touched the little jackets that had been molded on tiny forms, in a professional, almost an institutional way—there was nothing maternal, or even sympathetic, in her care for them.

Lady Adela, her keys to the store-room depending with a rakish air from her substantial waistline, where she had thrust them, was frankly idle. Her kind face held lines of disappointment, almost of sadness, and her attitude was that of one to whom time is a burden.

“Well, Mother?” Pamela emphasized her own industry by speaking in a crisp tone—her mother’s presence, with its aimless and rather dependent air, irritated her. Her fingers flew with well-directed energy.

“Yes, Pam?” Lady Adela brightened at being spoken to. She had been afraid to interrupt Pamela’s concentration.

“You’re going up to write letters?”

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"No, dear—at least—I hardly feel like writing, though of course, I must to Mrs. Wimbish."

Lady Adela's face grew crimson.

"She only did what was right in telling us about Harold—"

"You mean what was *said* about him! spread about by those disgusting Anglo-Indians!"

"It was not easy for her to write that to me, my dear. Both she and the Bishop talked it over carefully, before she did so—they wanted to do what was right, what would be the kindest thing to us. Personally, I'm glad she did."

"Personally, I know she enjoyed it—I can't bear that woman. Of course, you will tell her there isn't a word of truth in it—and that Harold is coming to us?"

"I'm so glad he is, dear boy. Yes, I'll go up and write, if you want me to." Lady Mordaunt got up slowly, but succeeded in sweeping Pamela's basket to the floor.

"Oh, I'm sorry! Let me put them back."

"No, Mother, *please!*"

"But I will!"

Bending to the task, the housekeeping keys flew from her belt, secreted themselves in a trouser leg of Jim Wattles' little boy, and thus accomplished a miraculous disappearance. Lady Adela, being often confronted by such mysteries, searched blindly. Pamela endured it as long as she could, and then firmly sent her mother upstairs. Lady Mordaunt went quite meekly, knowing that the

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curse of untidiness that she suffered from was especially trying to Pam. But she was worried about her eldest and dearest—the child did not look at all well.

Pausing at the door, Lady Adela made a timid suggestion.

“Pam, are you sure you’re quite well? I know an excellent tonic. If you’d only take it for a few weeks, I’m sure you’d feel better.”

“Better! I’m not in the least ill.” Pamela flushed slowly, and apparently over her entire body. Mme. du Guenic’s observation to Viola, that Pam looked thick, had perhaps some justification. Her face was a deep red now, and even her hands looked congested.

Lady Adela did not say any more to her, but went up to Viola’s old room, where she used the writing desk for her own correspondence. Many letters were written from here to Trevwithin, and Viola knew it, and loved having it so.

This morning Lady Adela found it very hard indeed to settle to her task. She wandered about the little room that was still pretty and fresh, but looked mysteriously deserted, and as if a light that had once burned brightly in it had gone out. The dependence of inanimate things on the hands that arrange them—the life that is lived with them—occurred to Lady Adela this morning as poignantly sad. She stroked an ample chintz-covered pillow tenderly, as though she would make up to it for a loss it had suffered, and that she understood. And

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then the absurdity of her action came to her, and she thrust it away, and went to the small chair by the fireplace. A fire was laid, but not neatly, odd scraps of paper protruded. Lady Adela removed them and put her hand up to her face, and presently the painful tears of age crept through her fingers, mingled with the soot that was on her hands, and streaked her face with black.

When Lady Mordaunt left the room, Pamela found the store-room keys that had apparently ceased to exist, without difficulty, and at once put her work away. It had served as an outlet for some of the nervous energy that tormented her.

In the drawing room was a large and very beautiful Florentine mirror. Cupids supported it, and from its position on the wall it reflected the color and movement of the rose garden.

Pamela, leaving the morning room and crossing the hall, went into the drawing room. Several miniatures hung on either side of the mantelpiece—the most interesting was one of Viola's father as a very young man. There was, perhaps, on the artist's part an almost conscious imitation of Lord Byron, in the rendering of the poise of the fine head, ardent eyes, and too sensitive mouth. The other miniatures were of estimable, if slightly faded, ladies of the Mordaunt family, in varying epochs, and with varying features, but of unvarying gentility.

Pamela, however, did not look at her ancestors. She went at once to the Florentine mirror, fashioned to hold beauty in its heart.

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She stood a long time before the reflection it gave back. As she looked indignation, bitterness, and self-pity flooded her mind, but underneath the waves of rebellion, something, that would not be stifled, pleaded, and struggled, and wept. The eyes of ugly women have many secrets. Sometimes they hold a Royal Guest, and nearly always they betray him. But the tears that come after are one of the secrets that they keep.

Pamela moved away from the mirror and began walking rapidly up and down the decorous, richly colored room. Words rushed to her lips in place of the mere painful sensations she had been suffering, and she was conscious of making an effort of the will, as she let the words escape, as though they could be rendered potent by her strong assertion.

“It’s not impossible—it’s not impossible—it would be right to have it happen, it must happen.”

Pamela longed to seize on a possible event that—it is true—she had only glimpsed, to shape it to her own needs, and then to urge it to a swift and tangible completion. She did not feel that she was ridiculous in her heavy, but fiery determination, to make Harold Gaunt her lover. Nor did she condemn herself for the cruel jealousy she had suffered, when on Gaunt’s last visit he had so obviously adored Viola. That Viola had married McIvor and thus removed herself from the field in which she had the unfair advantage of her beauty, seemed to Pamela a tardy but hopeful sign from

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the Powers that Be that she herself was to be at last considered. Under all the ugly facts of her mental and moral turmoil, like the swirl of disturbed waters concealing the reflection of a star, was one beautiful truth, and it shone with the pure fixed purpose of a star. It allied itself with the forces of nature, with the enduring things. It was the truth of love, seeking through egotism, envy, and error not freedom for itself, but unity with another.

The soul that can envisage the eternal, through love, can become eternal. But there are many ways, and it is a long journey to perfection. As Pamela made her assertions, aloud, she was busy with plans.

Lady Adela had received, at the same time with Mrs. Wimbish's lurid, if reluctant, account of Harold and Mrs. Lathrop, word from her nephew that he would be very glad to come to Thorley. Around this fact Pamela built her hopes. Because of his coming she was glad of the bright sky, the opulent English autumn. She was glad of the dignity of her home, and the quiet beauty of the room she walked in.

Going to the piano, Pamela sat down and began to play accurately from the music that was open before her. It was a song of Viola's, and had suited the peculiar quality and delicacy of her voice. Pamela's voice was larger, more resonant, but lacked the color of Viola's. The song was Leconte de Lisle's "Les Roses d'Ispahan."

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Pamela did not imitate Viola's phrasing of the exquisite words, but rendered them without self-consciousness, and with real joy in their beauty. As she sang the turmoil in her mind ceased. She no longer thought of herself. She thought of Gaunt and how she might help him with her belief in his honor. And she was conscious for the first time of the star shining through the troubled waters.

Lady Adela, who had finished her letters and come down for the keys, came to the drawing room to listen, and subsided on a chair from which she could see Pamela's face. When the song was finished, Lady Adela smiled happily.

"How nicely you sing, dear! I do like that little song. It always made me think of odd things—hot climates, and strange people. Now, of course—"

"Yes, Mother?"

Pamela looked at her mother, and tried to account for the streaks of soot on her face.

"Well, of course, now, it makes me think of cold climates—it *is* cold in Wales—and of Viola. It seemed so much her song. I wish we could visit her—don't you, Pam?"

"Perhaps sometime we may. But not just now. We must let Harold have his visit. We must go up to town, and show people there is nothing in all—all that talk."

"But, Pamela dear, Harold, you know, has not denied it. And he must know what is being said.

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I don't mean to speak unkindly, but Robert—says—”

“Oh, *Robert*, if he's your criterion!”

“He's a young man, dear, and we women have to accept things without judging too harshly.”

Lady Adela sighed and her kind face took on lines of pity that contended grotesquely with the soot.

“Mother, how can you take that attitude? How can you think a man like Harold—”

“I don't think, dear. I don't know. I should love him anyway. But Robert was urging us to accept Ian's invitation. He thinks that Harold would be very glad to go with us, to leave London at present, and as Viola is so anxious to have us—”

“When did you hear from her?”

“Yesterday—poor child. They are having trouble with the workers in the quarry—”

“Ah, that's what interests you! I hope McIvor holds out—he's quite right.”

“Viola writes that there is a good deal of ill feeling. Of course, Ian is away nearly every day doing what he can to help them with the farming. Oh, dear, it is all very trying, but I think we really should go to Viola.”

Pamela got up, and closed the piano. She did not feel like singing any more. But she went over to Lady Adela, and very gently with her own handkerchief removed the soot.

“Let's leave it, Mater—may we—to Harold?”

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Lady Mordaunt, astonished by the evidence of Pamela's handkerchief, smiled gratefully.

"Of course, dear, naturally, it shall be as he wishes. He's not to think us inhospitable. But I can't help hoping—"

Pamela laughed.

"No, Mother, of course you can't. And, somehow, I can't help hoping myself."

CHAPTER XV

Evelyn Malloring was distinctly bored. The world in which she was obliged to go on living seemed to offer no adequate reason for her existence. The thought of a winter in Cairo was briefly entertained, to be dispelled by the names of her acquaintances that were to seek change in the land of the Moslem. A mental picture of Lady Mainwarring shrouded in purple veils and mounted on a camel, attacked Lady Evelyn with the vigor of nightmare, in which the voices of the Drummonds and her own John, droned to satiety. Italy, the Lakes, Rome, were also rejected. There, too, varied by an occasional and astonishing person who was "seeing things," would be the same faces that looked at her across London dinner tables, gossiped in drawing rooms, and yawned at the theaters.

As an exponent of the new faith, Lady Malloring felt alarm at the depth of her ennui and depression. She could settle to nothing, and had been for the last ten days unable to inhale through her left nostril and exhale through the right, according to the instructions of the Brahmin who had been her guide.

Now, in her sitting room, done over from a charming, if frivolous, copy of Madame de

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Pompadour's, into a melancholy yellow apartment, that color corresponding to the hue of her soul, Lady Evelyn, enveloped in a hideous one-piece garment of the same tone, awaited events. And she was rewarded. A pale footman, who looked as though he had been grown under glass, knocked softly, and presented Mme. du Guenic's card. At once new life seemed to flow in Lady Malloring's veins.

"Ask her to come up, Dodson."

"Yes, my Lady."

"Or—no."

Lady Evelyn looked at her odd and depressing surroundings.

"I'll go down, and you may bring tea."

Removing the one-piece garment, Lady Malloring selected and was soon enclosed in an elaborate product of the Rue de L'Opera. It had been very expensive, and the shop was a smart one—so its owner wore it with touching confidence.

As her maid gave a few skilful touches to her blond and wavy hair, Lady Evelyn mused over her visitor's coming with interest and delight. It seemed Mme. du Guenic's fate, in England at least, to be regarded as a sensation, when she desired to make a call. But there is a curious psychology that accounts for the effect some personalities produce and the reactions they cause in others.

Perhaps Evelyn Malloring was in a particularly sensitive and receptive state of mind, for as she

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greeted her friend warmly, almost effusively, and urged tea and some really delicious and intimate little cakes upon her, Lady Evelyn knew that Mme. du Guenic was no longer formidable. She had been that always, to people of less brain than herself, and had shown very little tolerance to those of her own sex who persisted in trying to force gossip upon her, or secrets from her.

But to-day she was different. Evelyn Malloring knew it, and curiosity that had been denied during her breathing achievements became alive in her.

Mme. du Guenic was, as always, handsomely dressed. Perhaps there was even a little more care in her selection of the exact shade of brown, to bring out the color in her remarkable eyes—an over-emphasis of youth in her very erect carriage.

Evelyn Malloring, looking into her face at some new and delicate lines near the mouth, was not afraid to make inquiries, or to proffer any information that she herself might have.

“One lump?”

“Oh, please, none! How nice of you to ask me, though, and not to recognize at once a martyr to the—”

Mme. du Guenic paused a moment, closing her lips decisively, then she opened them and finished her sentence, —“the flesh.”

“As one prays on Sunday to be delivered—”

“*Tante mieux*, for your charity. But I mean it quite personally. I might almost say in person—

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that is why I must forego, with tears, that delicious cake."

Lady Evelyn, feeling refreshed, and conscious of her own slimness, took a pink cake.

"How nice of you to cheer me up, to-day. You can't think how dull I've been—"

"Dull! But why? We French women hear so much of the English woman's interest and influence—your life here, with your husband, must be full of interest—and activity."

"I think that's exaggerated. At any rate, I'm sure I've very little influence—"

Lady Evelyn thought of Lord Henry Drummond and her John, and was able to smile.

"It's people—my friends—that make my life for me." (Already was the Brahmin forgotten.) "And I've seen very little of some of them lately. Perhaps, you can tell me something of Viola Mordaunt—or rather, McIvor? No one has seen them—they were married—"

"They were married at my home, very quietly."

"Oh, so they were! How delightful for you! But since then, I hear they've gone to some extraordinary place." Lady Malloring's eyes grew round.

"I heard it was almost savage—and that Viola was really in danger from the natives."

Mme. du Guenic put her cup down. "I've just come from there," she said briefly. She had to fight her distaste of Lady Malloring's curiosity.

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“Viola is very well. The life is naturally not like that of fashionable London, and she is alone a good deal. But the country itself—” she shrugged. “I could only look and marvel and exclaim, ‘Colossal!’”

“Rough and wild, you mean?”

Mme. du Guenic permitted her eyes to become romantic.

“It’s like a castle in dreams!”

“Let us hope, not in bad dreams!”

“Speaking of Viola, did that cousin of hers marry in India? Gaunt, his name was. I thought at one time there was an understanding between Pamela Mordaunt and him. But nothing came of it?”

Lady Evelyn brightened. “Harold Gaunt is, I’m afraid, not a very proper young man. There are more than rumors about him, and a dejected-looking, married person, from somewhere in India. She’s actually followed him out here. He is very good looking,” Lady Evelyn added irrelevantly.

Mme. du Guenic listened composedly, as she drew on her gloves.

“How absurd! that’s your Mrs. Grundy—forgive me, but she is so quaint in making a nine days’ wonder out of a young man! At any rate, your wicked town talk has not reached the country, for Viola told me, before I left, that she was expecting Mr. Gaunt, with Lady Mordaunt and Pamela, at Trevwithin.”

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“Of course, if his family ignores it—”

“Let us by all means do likewise.”

When her guest had gone Evelyn Malloring had an inspiration. She looked out Gaunt’s address at his club, and then wrote and sent him a very cordial invitation to dine and go to the Opera. Having abandoned her faith, Lady Evelyn gave no thought to Sir John’s dislike of music, and thus unconsciously demonstrated the power of free will, but she did bestow thought on her guest, and wished that there was a more cheerful production. McIvor had been bored, she was sure, but it was not her fault. Perhaps this young man would not be so difficult.

“Besides,” Lady Evelyn added aloud, “if I should see him, I could tell if there were any truth in all that talk.”

Going up to dress, Lady Evelyn walked with a light and cheerful step. She paused at her sitting room, where the thought of Lady Mainwarring and the camel had oppressed her—summoned a footman, and gave orders for a decorator to be sent to her the next day.

“I’m going to try something Italian this time, Céleste,” she confided to her maid.

“An interesting period—something mysterious and weird. I wonder about a *Borgia* room?”

Tapping, and coming in at the same time, as was his habit, Sir John heard the question. He looked at his wife admiringly, and gave her a solid marital kiss. It did not thrill Lady Evelyn.

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“What’s that, pettie, that you want, that you’re going to have, I mean? Another Ba-Hah?”

“No, John, I’m tired of that. I want the room done over.” Lady Evelyn, though a trifle vague about her choice, felt confidence before her husband. She gave him a glance full of intelligence and erudition.

“It’s to be a Borgia, John.”

And Sir John, not to be outdone, responded warmly:

“Naturally, my dear, just the thing for you.”

CHAPTER XVI

On a windy evening, the following week after Mme. du Guenic's call in Half Moon Street, Viola and McIvor were without guests in Trevwithin. They had dined early, and in the large drawing room that had been restored and was hung with Pompeian red curtains, in the immense fireplace of which great pieces of beech wood burned, they had the opportunity for talk.

McIvor was tired and despondent. Affairs in the village were very bad. The quarries were closed, and the men in a sullen spirit that refused to recognize any attempt on the owner's part to assist them with instruction in the cultivation of their land, spent their days in idle talk, and steady drinking.

There was distress in the homes, and the hearts of the women ached with anxiety for their husbands and children, and burned with resentment against McIvor.

Viola had made one visit to Glas Ogven, to please her husband. She had been charmed with the cottages, that, seen on a bright day, showed walls of pink and yellow plaster under thatched roofs, and bloomed like delightfully colored flowers behind honeysuckle hedges, in gardens full of foxgloves, small sweet roses, and the drone of appreciative and useful bees.

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She had entered one of the cottages to leave presents of jam and sweets for the children. A dark, shy, and exquisitely clean woman had admitted her to her home. Viola had crossed the shining brass thresholds and sat in the place of honor to be served with tea, brown bread, and honey. As she accepted this generous hospitality, Viola had been conscious of hot anger against her husband.

The interior of the cottage spoke even more eloquently of the loving care that kept the row of brass and pewter mugs shining, the floor clean, the quaint latticed windows spotless, and that cherished a bright geranium in a pot, in the kitchen window.

Her hostess had been mending a tear in a rough coat, and, at Viola's coming, had put it aside. But while Viola took her tea, the mending went on.

"If you'll excuse me, ma'am, I would like this done before my man comes in."

She had held the garment up to show the extent of the injury done to it.

"My man is a big fellow," she had added, in a voice full of pride.

Presently, two children had come to the door and halted, waiting to catch their mother's eye—and, devoured with curiosity, to see the strange and alarming new lady.

Viola held up a package of sweets to show them, and they walked in slowly, the smaller boy hiding

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behind his sister. Their eyes, which were blue and round, looked out over two pairs of fat red cheeks, with expressions of longing and desire that struggled with distrust.

To reassure them, Viola had smiled and put the package down beside her. There had been a soft rush, a frantic scampering, and a maternal admonition—but the sweets had disappeared. As the mother looked up from her husband's coat, Viola saw something shining in her eyes, and knew that the little cottage was a home.

In the great drawing room in Trevwithin McIvor seated himself, with a sigh, by the fire. His face looked tired and strained, even in the soft light of the wax candles. Viola went slowly to the piano and began to sing “*Les Berceaux*.”

“*Le long du Quai, les grands vaisseaux,
Que la houle incline en silence,
Ne prennent pas garde aux berceaux,
Que la main des femmes balance.
Mais viendra le jour des adieux,
Car il faut que les femmes pleurent,
Et que les hommes curieux
Tentent les horizons qui leurrent!*”

As she sang the song of the sea in this room where its sound was always audible, Viola brought before McIvor the sight of swaying waters, of receding ships—the sense of death that is in every parting—but also, as her voice, warm and pure, sang of the mother rocking her child, Viola brought

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life, and love before him—the very heart of life—to which all wanderers for whom it burns, must return from any port. The song helped McIvor. It braced him to go on with his work, to stick to the difficult task.

When Viola finished “*Les Berceaux*” she left the piano and went to McIvor. She was determined to speak to him about the village, and she had sung to give herself courage. She had been planning to do so all day, but now that the moment had come, it was very difficult.

As she came near him, McIvor looked up at her.
“What is it, Viola?”

As he looked at his wife, the realization of her very great beauty surprised him. He saw also that she was embarrassed, and hoped that she was going to ask a favor of him. So he waited very patiently for her to speak.

McIvor’s direct question had taken Viola’s small courage from her. She had no idea of what her husband was thinking—for, though he thought her lovely, he never said so—and she knew that he liked to be quiet, to read, in the long evenings.

“Is it something about our visitors?” he asked, quite kindly.

“Oh—no—Ian—you are very good to have them—and I am looking forward so much to seeing them—counting the days, in fact.”

McIvor winced, but said nothing.

“You are so—good, Ian—to me,” Viola struggled on. “Perhaps you will be angry at what

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I am going to say—but—I can't help it. I must say it. It's about the quarries—about the men out of work. Do *please, please* take them on again. We could do with much less—and they are going to suffer—they have such ducky little houses, Ian—and you have always been so good to them—they can't understand this."

The feeling of warmth and *bien être* that Viola's song had given him left McIvor. He longed to ask, "Don't you understand me? Don't you know why I do this?" But she must know, and he could not ask.

"That's just it, Viola. They must understand. I can't pay them for something that has no market value. The whole situation has been false. I have to clear it up—and I mean to."

At that moment McIvor looked more like the picture of his dissenting ancestor than Viola had ever seen him. Even then she did not quite give up. But McIvor definitely settled it. He picked up, and immediately became immersed in, his book.

Several days later, the village was in ferment. The carriage that brought Lady Adela, Pamela and Harold Gaunt from the station was surrounded by sullen looking men, but there was no actual demonstration, and they reached Trevwithin without incident.

Lady Adela had been numb with fear and clasped Viola on arriving, as one might who had been rescued from almost certain death. Pamela went at once to McIvor, and expressed her admira-

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tion of his behavior. Harold Gaunt said very little.

The day after their arrival, McIvor took them about the castle. Lady Adela was reassured, in daylight, by the walls and gate that guarded them.

“Unless they could climb over,” she added anxiously. Pamela permitted herself a look of scorn, which she was immediately ashamed of.

“*Mother*, what are you thinking of? They wouldn’t dream of coming up here. Ian has only to sit tight, and they’ll soon give up.”

In spite of her championing him, McIvor was conscious of irritation at Pamela’s assertion. He longed to be alone with Viola, but he longed more for her to understand him.

“You are quite safe here, Lady Mordaunt. But I’m going to ask that you don’t venture from the grounds. There might be trouble, and there is no need to take any risk.”

“Indeed not,” Lady Adela had responded promptly.

“I’m sure it’s very interesting here—there would be nothing to go out for.”

McIvor turned to her and smiled. She gave him the feeling that she was a firm ally that did not, however, know his real situation. Mme. du Guenic in her very short visit had made, he was sure, terrible observations.

But Lady Adela seemed to move in an atmosphere of trust and warm affection, in which the most sensitive might be at ease. And McIvor was

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sensitive—was suffering in his life with Viola. Behind his reserve, fortified by pride, the real man yearned for what was denied him.

As they walked in the courtyard, the morning met them delicately, filtering its sunshine through vaporous white clouds, and subduing the sea breezes to a nuance, a caress.

McIvor turned to look for Viola, but neither she nor Gaunt was in sight.

“Shall we wait for them?”

Lady Adela glanced at Pamela—and hesitated.

Pamela spoke quickly. “Let’s go on—that is, if you’re not tired showing us?”

There was an enclosed garden at Trevwithin, with radiating red brick walks, clipped yew hedges, a sun dial, and borders of box around irregular beds of roses. Every morning that was fine, Viola, in a shady garden hat, and with a basket and some dangerous-looking scissors in her hand, went there to choose for herself from the small, deep crimson, and very sweet blossoms.

As she cut the flowers, Viola sang a gay little song. Her clear voice reached Gaunt and guided him, and he waited in the shadow of the hedge and watched her.

But almost at once, Viola stopped singing, turned, saw him—and dropped her roses. They made a crimson stain against her white frock.

“You *couldn’t* have heard me?”

Gaunt went forward and began picking up the flowers.

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“You must have felt me looking at you.”

Gaunt stood upright and took her hand—and again the flowers fell.

“It’s years, little Viola, years since I’ve seen you.”

Viola tried to speak. But the sight of his eyes, the sound of his voice—the touch of his hand, were answered. In the depths of her heart something stirred from a sleep that had been like death. Stirred with a glorious life, tears rushed to her eyes, overflowed.

“What is it, child? Did I frighten you?”

“Yes,” said Viola, “yes.”

“Forgive me for it—how beastly.”

The winds of morning touched Harold’s thick hair and dried Viola’s wet cheeks.

“What a place to find you in! You’re like an enchanted princess in her castle—”

Viola laughed. “I remember playing as a child that my poor cat was one, under a baleful charm, and waiting to be released.”

“And the charm that could do that was—what?”

“It was very long ago—I don’t remember.”

“Viola, does anything seem long ago to—you? Don’t you realize your youth—your beautiful youth?”

Viola turned away from him.

“Perhaps I seem young to you, Harold, because you knew me—when I was—a tomboy. But I feel quite grown up—and sedate.”

Gaunt looked at her differently. He was trying to see something beside her beauty, for in her eyes,

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larger and darker than he remembered them to be, was a look that went to his heart. A child that had been thrust into life without preparation—into knowledge—loneliness—fear—could have looked as Viola did. And she had cried—when he first spoke to her!

Very gently Gaunt felt for Viola's hand, took it—raised it to his lips.

The sound of a church bell, faint, but very clear, floated in the air. It recalled a day set apart by man for worship. In some mysterious way it transformed the delicate shining of the morning into a pleasant day to go to church.

Pamela and McIvor, ready for service, came into the garden.

“Macready expects us, Viola—especially to-day. I think we should go.”

“Yes, Harold, come along. He's a perfectly ripping parson. Has lived here for fifteen years—isn't it, Ian?”

“Quite that.”

McIvor looked at Viola a little impatiently. She knew what a point he made of going to the chapel—and how he disliked being late. Only the family from Trevwithin and the servants attended, since the troubles in the village had begun, and McIvor felt it a very decided duty to be there.

“Will you go in first? I shall wait for you, my dear.”

“Perhaps you know Macready? He was a fellow of Magdalen.”

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McIvor turned to Gaunt, who was picking up Viola's roses.

"No—sorry! I don't think I do. I knew his wife years ago. I am anxious to see her. It will be a surprise to her—won't it, Cousin Ian? Fancy living here—"

"Pamela," Viola's voice broke in hurriedly, "Won't you come with me?"

Gaunt having at last collected and secured the roses gave them into Viola's arms. As he did so he saw her face go white to the lips. Pamela, watching him, saw it, too, and exclaimed:

"Why, Viola, what is it? You look as if you'd seen a ghost!"

McIvor, who had looked distressed when Mrs. Macready was mentioned, frowned. The slight dislike that he had for Pamela deepened. He turned to her. "Let's go on—Viola and Gaunt can follow, if they like, but we won't disappoint old Mac."

Though he felt her resistance, McIvor took Pamela with him. He could not bear to have Viola speak without reserve to this girl—of what she had never spoken to him. In some strange way the name of Dora Macready seemed to him to accuse, to cry out, almost like murder that had been done in secret—but that would not remain secret.

After they had gone, Gaunt went to Viola. The look of terror he had seen come to her moved him indescribably. The love he had felt for her seemed almost overwhelmed by a tremendous pity, until

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he touched her—then the two feelings became one—and mastered him.

“What is it, Viola—tell me—you must tell me—what has he done to you?”

With all her force Viola struggled to leave his arms.

“Nothing—Harold—nothing.”

“It’s about that Macready woman. What about her—what has she done?”

“Don’t—ah, if you knew.”

A picture that Viola often saw floated again before her eyes. A young face, pallid, agonized—overwhelmed by death. A figure in clerical black, shrinking away in nervous fear, walking safely and strongly out of doors.

“I know—you have seen something horrible. Tell me, little Viola, tell me!”

His hands pressed heavily on her shoulders, and their touch, their pressure, banished the vision of Dora. In its place a feeling of tremendous melancholy, of a terrible sorrow that was like the realization of love lost out of life, filled Viola. Tears came to her eyes—again rolled down her face. Her body shook. It was agony to weep, so the tears felt as though they were oozing as blood would from some fearful wound.

“I’ll tell you, Harold—she’s dead—she’s dead. But that’s not all—I’m not crying only for her—it’s for myself—I’m afraid—I’m afraid.”

Gaunt’s arms were about her—her face buried in his rough coat.

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Leone, who was looking for her mistress, stopped at the yew hedge for a moment, and then went on quickly. There was a smile of peculiar satisfaction about her mouth that tilted her little mustache amusingly.

CHAPTER XVII

Gaunt waited for Viola in the courtyard of Trevwithin. The great pile of the castle reared itself into a sky of faint blue, in which clouds like white birds were floating. On the walls that enclosed the yard, brown lichen had fastened its curious life, and on the green lawn the sun threw lances of light.

Presently, a figure armed with an umbrella and a small book appeared. It was Lady Adela, and she signaled to Gaunt.

“Do walk with me, Harold. I’ve lost my glasses—only temporarily, I hope, but I’m quite blind without them. Please, if you don’t mind, read this to me.”

Gaunt took the book from her. It was a copy of Wordsworth, turned to the “Ruins of a Castle in North Wales.” He read slowly, in his pleasant voice, giving the words their value.

“Through shattered galleries, mid roofless halls,
Wandering with timid footsteps oft betrayed,
The stranger sighs, nor scruples to upbraid
Old time, though he, gentlest among the thralls
Of destiny, upon these wounds hath laid
His lenient touches, soft as light that falls
From the wan moon, upon the towers and walls,
Light deepening the profoundest sleep of
shade....”

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“Ah!” Lady Adela put up her hand. Her voice was quiet, content.

“That makes me feel that even old ruins of women are needed.”

Gaunt closed the book abruptly. It was not possible for him to think of age—ruin and decay—even with their gentlest compensations. He longed to tell his aunt of youth—and of something else that was the essence of youth and was hot in his veins. He looked at his aunt’s gentle old face, and the desire to speak left him.

Lady Adela, glad of companionship, took Gaunt’s arm to walk with him. As she did so the umbrella freed itself with a jerk, executed a marvelous *pas seul* and disappeared triumphantly over the wall.

Lady Adela, with an indignant cry, started in pursuit. Gaunt overtook her, and turning, saw Viola, looking at them in astonishment. But Lady Adela wanted her umbrella. She waved her arms excitedly.

“Go on, Harold, before it’s lost. Is there a gate or—something?”

“Yes, there is a gate,” Viola called. Gaunt ran after her flying figure. At the gate Viola paused, confused by the apparent simplicity of the lock. Gaunt tried to help her. His hand touched hers and he drew back. With astonishingly little effort, Viola was able by a slight pressure on the door that was set into the wall, to open it, and she and Gaunt stepped out of the castle grounds.

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They saw a tremendous prospect. In the west, the aspiring outlines of the Snowdon mountains were veiled in the purple mists of morning, through which the sun drew color that was like a wonderful harmony. In the east the murmuring ocean mirrored the blue sky that it gazed on. Below them, a mountain torrent flashed white spray against gray rocks—made brown pools where slim white birches waded, made banks of bright green moss, to shelter bluebells and brown snails. Gaunt and Viola were standing on a hill top—wild grasses blew in the wind, and delicate white harebells hid amongst them.

A short way down the slope was an avenue of yew trees that led to an ancient wall.

Viola turned to Gaunt. “Now I know what an Irishman means when he says ‘the top of the morning!’”

“I wish it to you, Viola.”

“Shall we see what’s behind that wall, Harold?”

“Don’t you like it here, in the sun?” There was a note of reluctance in his voice.

“Of course. We’ll wait here if you prefer.”

With a motion as lithe as a boy’s, Viola sat down on a flat rock. She put her hands up to her hair. The tiny action, without meaning in itself, had the almost terrible power of things that are the repetition of a past act. It had the power to bring to Gaunt’s mind the day he had been able to tell Viola, after he had stolen a kiss, that he loved her.

“What is it, Harold?”

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She smiled at him. Evidently it had recalled nothing to Viola.

Gaunt flung himself at her feet.

"It's you, Viola—I don't understand and—and I want to, for your sake—you're unhappy. There's something wrong. If you don't want to tell me, can't you tell Aunt Adela?"

As he spoke Gaunt was conscious of making an effort very unusual to him. He was deliberately forcing a confidence that he shrank from hearing.

A vivid flush stained Viola's cheeks. She looked away from him.

"No," she said in a low voice. "No. It's nothing. I'm very silly. Perhaps, I'm nervous—like—Evelyn Malloring, and had better take up her cult."

Gaunt frowned. "Don't, Viola, I thought you trusted me—don't laugh at me."

"But I wasn't! It's so long since I've seen you. Do tell me what you've been doing. I was in Nice when we heard you'd gone back to India.

"I remember about that native—how splendid it was—you killing him."

"My dear child, that's a flattering but unchristian remark."

"But really, do tell me. The mere thought of the East fires my imagination!"

"I should like to show you my district—in the proper season, of course."

"Tell me about the people that are with you—"

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Gaunt stirred. He looked suddenly uncomfortable, as though he had on the moment remembered something unpleasant.

“If you are determined to let me make a bore of myself, I do solemnly promise to tell you at the right time of an Indian mystery—and in the meanwhile, let us not waste our opportunities, but examine what is before us?”

With a quick movement, Viola got to her feet, and they picked their way through the wild grass, to the densely growing yew trees. Walking beneath them, they were in a twilight of green shade. Over the entrance of the old wall was a quaint bell cot. Viola and Gaunt passed into an open enclosure. Before them was a tiny church, and clustered about it crowded and forgotten graves.

Reverently they looked into the sacred building. At first they could see nothing distinctly. But gradually by a golden light that was diffused from a glass window over the chancel, and that represented in yellow stains the Holy Family, they saw the interior of the church.

Over the chancel was an oaken canopy painted in red, yellow and blue. A rood screen of beautiful carved wood protected the chancel space. The east window was choked with ivy, the floor was of slate unevenly laid; through apertures in the roof, the sky showed in living blue, and the sound of the sea pervaded the House of God with a voice like a tremendous organ.

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As their eyes became accustomed to the subdued light, they saw that there was a worshipper in the church. It was an old woman. Above her thin brown neck that looked like a withered stalk, her white hair was gathered into a small knot. Her shoulders, underneath a black shawl, bent earthward. Through the flesh of her face might be traced the salient lines of her skull. Her dim eyes, as she lifted them to the altar, were bright with hope. As Viola looked at the old figure, she dropped to her knees, and Gaunt knelt beside her.

And it seemed to Viola that a great burden was lifted from her. All the doubt, melancholy, and sadness, all the despair of a loving woman condemned to do without love, left her. For the first time since her marriage she was able to pray, with the feeling that her prayer would be heard. Now that feeling sustained her. Hope filled her heart—joy flooded her.

The old woman, her devotions done, went slowly out, threaded her way between the graves, and disappeared.

It was nearly noon when Viola and Gaunt came back to Trevwithin. Luncheon was to be at one, and Viola went at once to her room.

Leone, looking unusually affable, showed pleasure in the practise of her skill. She dressed Viola's hair high, and put on her a gown of clinging white material that was very simply and beautifully cut. When she had quite finished, Leone drew back with vociferous admiration. Viola

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looked at her in surprise, but spoke kindly. She was glad to see the girl becoming human once more—and glanced at her own reflection, with surprised pleasure. She had color, and her eyes were smiling.

Luncheon was served in a tower room. The walls were hung with Gobelin tapestries woven for McIvor's father, and representing figures from the "Mabinognion."

"A maid, whose head was more yellow than the flower of the broom, her skin whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer her hands and fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemones amidst the spray of the meadow fountain . . . four white trefoils sprung up wherever she trod. And therefore was she called Olwen."

The figure of a youth "upon a steed of dappled gray . . . in his hand two spears of silver . . . a gold hilted sword upon his thigh . . . And there was precious gold of the value of three hundred kine upon his shoes, and upon his stirrups. And the blades of grass bent not beneath him, so light was his courser's tread, as he journeyed towards the gate of Arthur's palace."

They were figures of legend and romance—enchanted castles and knights of tourney—woven in a maze of delicate color.

Massive silver candelabra holding wax candles were fastened to the walls. A great oak serving table extended across one side of the room, and gleamed with silver. In the center of the room

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was a long dining table. On it was a silver dish holding Viola's red roses, silver serving plates, and glasses of uncut crystal.

Before sitting down, McIvor drew Lady Adela to the window.

"You love poetry—look out; and admit that Keats has been here in imagination, at least." Speaking slowly, in his rather deep voice, McIvor repeated:

"'Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.'"

Viola, as she listened, heard in her husband's voice a note of deep appreciation. She remembered how, in a garden spot of southern France, she had tried to share with him that beauty of the southern country.

Lady Adela was delighted with McIvor. He had seemed alarmingly formidable, at first, but in his love of his native—and wonderful—home, she thought he showed a natural pride that was frank and charming.

And Pamela had told her of what McIvor was doing for the village.

The Reverend Macready lunched with them. He dwelt somewhat gloomily on the shortcomings of the poor. They offended him by a determined preference for beer over church attendance.

"They're too comfortable—they won't take the trouble to come."

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Gaunt, who was sitting opposite Viola, looked up, caught her eye.

McIvor answered, "They're not comfortable now Macready. They're staying home because of the trouble."

"It's a thankless task, trying to help them." The clergyman sighed.

McIvor turned to Viola. "By the way, what became of you and Gaunt? Where did you go?"

He tried to make his question casual to keep out of it the hurt he had felt at Viola's disregard of his wish. In doing so, he sounded coldly indifferent.

Lady Adela turned to Viola. "Did you capture the wretched thing, after all? They went after my umbrella, Ian."

Viola reddened. She had forgotten the umbrella—and she had forgotten the Reverend Macready. It had not seemed long that she and Gaunt had been upon the hilltop and in the little church. As she hesitated, to her relief Pamela spoke.

"It's in your room, Mother dear—"

"As it's Sunday, Mr. Macready, Ian has decided that we may venture out of the grounds, and visit the quarries. They're quite a way from the village—and I think it will be very interesting."

The conversation became general. Viola, out of gratitude, relieved Pamela of Mr. Macready, and by her unusual cordiality modified that gentleman's gloomy opinion of humanity.

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He had been unable to find receptive relatives for his motherless children, and perhaps it was not strange that his domestic troubles colored his outlook.

After coffee, Pamela and Viola went up to change for the walk. Lady Adela, in temporary possession of her glasses, decided to stop at home and enjoy her Wordsworth. She watched the party start off, and waved what she thought was her handkerchief, but discovered to be Pamela's embroidery.

Viola and Gaunt were walking ahead—Pamela and McIvor following.

CHAPTER XVIII

As they left Trevwithin behind them, Pamela and McIvor followed the others. Macready led the way over what seemed a trackless expanse of rock, yellow gorse, purple heather, and bracken. As they descended they could see Glas Ogven in the distance, a faint smoke rising from the cottages.

Pamela walked well, but to-day she seemed absent-minded, and stumbled once or twice, and McIvor had to steady her. When he did so the second time he noticed that her eyes were fixed on Viola and Gaunt, who had fallen behind Macready.

So McIvor watched them. They walked perfectly together, and occasionally he saw Viola's profile as she turned to smile or answer her companion. As he watched, the longing to be with Viola as he never had been—to be one in spirit as well as in body—almost mastered him. He felt that the force of his love could compel—answer and understanding from her, if he could only give it rein—and he cursed his temperament, that doomed him to feel, but to be dumb.

Viola slipped and McIvor saw Gaunt put his arm about her for a moment—and in that moment he felt positive hatred of Gaunt. He himself could not go on walking until the arm was withdrawn.

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He was grateful for one thing. Pamela did not talk to him.

Presently Macready shouted, and held up his hand. They were approaching the quarry. At intervals heaps of slate and refuse had been thrown on the ground. In front of them was the amphitheater—the pits and the idle cars. In the mournful light of late afternoon, it looked like a livid scar.

“Shall I go ahead and reconnoiter? We had better see the condition of things before the ladies come down.”

Viola was conscious of a feeling of irony when Macready spoke. His consideration for “the ladies” provoked it.

“I’ll come with you.”

McIvor joined him, and the two disappeared slowly into the pit. Pamela, who seemed restless, wandered after them.

A cool breeze sprang up. Viola, who was not very warmly clad, shivered in it. Instantly Gaunt took off his coat and put it about her shoulders. The touch of his hands as he did so told her something.

Fog began to drift in from the sea, and lie in long wreaths along the moors.

“Shan’t we find the others, Harold? I’m superstitious—I’m afraid of the Gurach Y Rhybin, the hag of the mists.”

“You’re afraid, with me?” His voice sounded almost angry.

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"Not really, of course, but let's move up a little further. Perhaps we can find the sun."

"Yet it was you, this morning, who wanted to leave the sun!"

Viola stood up, and moved away from the shelter of a rock that she had been sitting in. As she did so, the report of a pistol rang out. At the same moment, it seemed to her, Gaunt flung himself in front of her—covered her with his body.

McIvor called frantically, "Are you hurt—are you hurt?"

Gaunt answered him, "No! but your man has gone into the quarry—go after him!"

"Right!" McIvor called back.

"But, Harold, they're not armed! Isn't it dangerous for them to attempt to find him in this mist? That shot was intended for us—for—for me."

Gaunt had not moved from where he had thrown himself, nor spoken since he answered McIvor. Viola tried gently to disengage herself. As she did so, Gaunt put one hand up with an odd groping gesture. Instinctively Viola took his hand and immediately hers was covered with something warm and sticky—his arm dropped to his side, and his face, in which his eyes closed, faded into a strange pallor, as though it were seen through water.

Terror filled Viola. She was afraid to touch him—afraid to leave him. She took out a tiny and absurd handkerchief and dabbed helplessly at the

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blood on her own hand. A peculiar salt smell filled her nostrils. It sickened her. She struggled to her feet to call for help, but the thought of what her voice might attract, silenced her. Even in the growing darkness she could see a widening stain on Gaunt's sleeve.

He was utterly helpless, dependent on her. With hesitating, trembling fingers, Viola lifted his head and put his coat that had been about her own shoulders under it. Then, awkwardly, she unfastened his collar, unbuttoned his shirt, slipped it back on the shoulder, until a small black hole, from which blood was flowing, was exposed.

She was wearing a blouse of soft white silk. Hurriedly she took it off, tore the sleeves out, and into strips. The collar of the blouse she folded into a soft pad, and placed over the wound. Then, half supporting him, she adjusted the strips of silk as a bandage, through each layer of which the blood seeped as she bound it.

The mist was all about them now, damp and clinging, and obliterating every path. Gaunt's hands were cold. Taking the unhurt one between hers, Viola began to chafe it, rubbing towards the heart. Some forgotten memory seemed to say to her, "rub towards the heart, not from it." The moor seemed full of whispering voices—of unseen eyes, to which she and Gaunt were visible. The night was malignant—a cold wind that blew from the sea seemed to carry with the cry of the Cyhyraith that portends death.

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As Viola bent over Gaunt to cover him with her own jacket, he opened his eyes, looked full into hers. She could see the motion of his lashes. An immense relief came to her. He kept his eyes on hers with a steady gaze.

“Viola!”

“Yes, Harold. Are you in pain?”

“No. But I want you to do something for me.”

“Just tell me. I’m so stupid—but I will try to do anything you tell me.”

“Bend down your head.”

Viola leaned near him.

“I want you to do this more than I have ever wanted anything in the world.” His voice stopped.

“If I can—”

“You can, if you will. And after you have done it—I want God to let me die.”

“Harold dear—” Viola strained to hear him. She did not hear anything else.

“It’s this, Viola—I love you—I need you—” His voice broke—then he whispered, “Kiss me, Viola—once—just once.”

His poor voice went to Viola’s heart—she knew that it spoke the truth—that her kiss would mean much to him, that her love was longed for, that he felt need of her; and she contrasted this need with what she thought was Ian’s independence—and she knew what it was to be hungry for love. But she was thinking of her husband when she bent down to Harold—and kissed him, tenderly, on the lips.

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A beam of light from a lantern penetrated the fog, and advancing, revealed—McIvor, Macready and Pamela. The men stooped at once to Gaunt.

McIvor took charge, directing the clergyman how to help him lift the injured man, giving the light to Viola, and telling Pamela to hold Gaunt's arm. McIvor took his head and shoulders and Macready his feet. In the confusion Viola hurriedly slipped into her jacket. As she did so, she saw McIvor looking at her, but he did not speak.

Very slowly and painfully, they made their way up to Trevwithin. Gaunt was heavy and the two men labored under his weight. Once Viola stumbled and nearly fell over a bit of slate, but Pamela walked steadily, holding Gaunt's arm. No one spoke. They seemed "like shadows moving in a world of shadow."

But they were shadows with flame at their hearts, flame of love—of longing, and of jealousy.

The kiss given in pity and taken by love had been seen.

McIvor strove with the fury that had possessed him, when under cover of darkness he saw Viola's white arms bend to Gaunt—her lips touch his. He had come upon them, had been able to speak normally—to direct, when he saw that Gaunt was wounded. But he had seen every action of Viola's as though she had moved in light. A power of terrible observation sprang up, and controlled his first impulse of destruction. Under that scrutiny

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Viola put on her jacket, rearranged her disheveled hair, guided them with the light, and stumbled over the rough way.

McIvor's hands that supported Gaunt's head longed, with an almost separate life of their own, to cast down their burden—to leave it to die on the moor.

When his hands seemed about to assert themselves, to perform what was surely his wish, McIvor looked at the stains on Gaunt's breast. In some strange way, the sight of his blood made it possible for McIvor to go on, and stay his hand, for the time. And Pamela had seen.

When Gaunt had at once accepted Lady Adela's suggestion that they come to Trevwithin, instead of staying on at Thorley, Pamela had felt disappointed, had been made miserable for a day. But they had traveled together, she had been with Harold under the spell of his blue eyes and careless voice; she had felt in some way—perhaps absurd for a woman—that she was acting chivalrously, protecting his name from the rumours of London, by going with him. She had felt that Gaunt knew that, and perhaps valued it. So she had not given up hope. For the time Pamela did not think of Viola—did not think of herself—thought only of Gaunt and her love for him. But to-day she had been forced to think of something else, had watched Viola and Gaunt leave the courtyard together, had waited for them to return, and she had seen that Viola's eyes were smiling.

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In the afternoon, Pamela had walked behind them—had seen how Gaunt watched and protected Viola from every inequality in the path, how he bent to catch her words, how he was intent upon her. And Pamela had gone away alone, so that she would not see this intention, to return to see it confirmed—made fact, as a sword that has been concealed in its sheath is seized by a strong hand, leaps out and thrusts.

But her hands, as she held his wounded one, were tender. They guarded, they sheltered—they were instinct with love.

At the gates of Trevwithin were lights and men and a waiting motor. Viola and Pamela were put into it, with Gaunt between them. He was unconscious, and his body leaned heavily against Pamela's. At the castle two footmen rushed out, and Gaunt was taken to his room.

In the great drawing room Lady Adela was unconcernedly reading. She was often alone and had very little idea of time, so that she had not become anxious as the afternoon slipped away. She was happy in the thought that Pamela and Harold were together.

Viola wanted to find her aunt, and knowing that she often sat in the red drawing room, crossed the hall to enter it. But McIvor was before her. He did not look at Viola, but spoke hurriedly, in a dry, low voice.

“Go to your room, Viola. I shall tell Lady Mordaunt. The doctor has been sent for, and

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after I have seen him, I am going into the village."

"But, Ian, I think that shot was meant for you—it would be folly for you to go to-night—"

"If it was meant for me, how did—" he hesitated at Gaunt's name. "How did your cousin—stop it?"

"Because he was with me—he protected me—"

McIvor's hand clenched. He interrupted Viola.

"I'm going at any rate. But you, Viola, go to your room and rest."

The effort that McIvor made to control himself seemed to send the blood racing to his heart, seemed to turn him, for the moment, into an automaton. But as he went in to Lady Adela, he felt that it would be possible to speak to her.

The man that had shot at Viola, but had wounded Harold, was the son of the old woman they had seen in the little church. He had earned, when the quarries were operating, twenty-five shillings a week, working in a gang of four—two of the men quarrying the slate, the other two splitting and dressing it.

His name was David Griffiths, and he lived in a pink circular hut built in the Roman period, that Viola had thought so charming. He lived with his wife, old mother, and two children. There was something strange about the children. They were never seen in the garden, but sometimes when their mother had gone out to see to the bees, and their grandmother slept over the peat fire, their white,

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unchildish faces might be seen pressed against the double-framed windows, and looking out of the woven diamond lattice. The faces would sometimes weep and sometimes laugh, and sometimes stare, with the eyes dull and their lips flaccid and drooling.

These strange children of his wrung David Griffiths' heart. But he was doing well, and he and his wife planned to save money that they might take the children to a great doctor in London.

As he worked in McIvor's quarry, classing the red, blue and green slate into its different sizes of queens, duchesses, countesses, and ladies, he would say over and over to himself the speech he was going to make the doctor—tell him how the little ones had been as bright and pretty as you please when they were tiny, but how they hadn't seemed to come along. He would tell the doctor everything about them, and then, surely—

One day, when he was making these plans—and cutting a queen that didn't come up to standard down to be a duchess—something very strange happened to David. On looking at his hand, instead of finding the slate in it, he saw a pick. Also, instead of being where he had been, he was on one of the steps. He was surrounded by four quarrymen—one of whom was looking at him with fear and rage. When David looked at him and dropped the pick, the man thrust his face forward, swore at him, and then moved off. The other men looked at David curiously, and one of them asked him:

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“Why did you want to do for him, mate?” and then they moved away.

David, who could not understand it, and was conscious of a pain in his head, went back to work—and his plans for the children.

When word came that the quarries were to close, despair came upon him. There was no fear of actual suffering—but where was the money coming from to add to their hoard for the doctor?

David could think of nothing else, until he began to think of who was taking his money away. Then he began to hate McIvor, though he was very careful not to say so. But he got a pistol from Port Madoc, and carried it. And he began to haunt the quarry and to walk on the moor. Very often he would sit down to rest and find himself transported as if by magic to another place. Always after such an occurrence, he would feel headache, malaise, terrible fatigue. But he never spoke of it to anyone.

After he had shot at Viola, Griffiths, still holding the pistol, had wandered across the moor into the quarry, and in the dense fog, traversed in safety each terrace. Then he had taken his familiar way to “Ye Labor in Vain Inn,” and reaching his hand for a mug of beer, became conscious of the pistol he held, and of the oppression of physical discomfort that he had begun to dread.

“Ye Labor in Vain” was crowded. Men in rough clothes were sitting at small tables, and all of them were drinking. Occasionally, a fragment of song

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would be heard, or a loud laugh, but on the whole, they were glum.

David Griffiths had been always looked askance at. The peculiar tragedy of his domestic life, as well as his obsession of saving, put Griffiths away from his fellows, who were imaginative and shy before unusual conditions.

To-night as David lurched into the small, dark room, sat down at a table and took his beer, Alan Jones, a splendid young man who had attended the Eisteddfod the year before, and had ever since sung parts of the Goredd Prayer aloud—in inspirational moments, checked the familiar words on his lips. He stared through the blue smoke from the men's pipes at Griffiths' face—and then at the pistol in his hand. Then he nudged his companion.

“Look—”

The other men at the table turned—stared.

Griffiths seemed sunk in stupor—his figure was inert, and fallen a little forward—he breathed heavily. As the men watched him, his hands drew up, knocking the mug of beer to the floor. His features were distorted—a short and piercing cry broke from his lips, and he fell to the floor, froth gathering at his mouth.

The men nearest him got up, gave him one look, and taking their mugs with them, went outside. No one made any attempt to aid or relieve Griffiths. They objected to his presence, and so left it.

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McIvor had found it possible to speak to Lady Adela. As Gaunt had been conscious of her uncritical mind and kind heart, so was McIvor aware of it. To anyone observant of the moods of others, he would have betrayed himself, for the mastery he had forced upon his nature, the iron control that it had endured while he was with Viola, was leaving him. Curtly he told Lady Adela of the accident, and made her remain with him, until word should come from the doctor.

Lady Adela, whose face had been rosy and placid in the light from the great candelabra, grew quite white. She started to her feet to go up stairs, to fly to her boy. McIvor stopped her. His voice was like a detaining hand.

“Don’t. Wait with me.”

Not knowing why she did it, Lady Adela obeyed him. She longed to be away. But McIvor did not talk to her.

He got up suddenly and extinguished some of the candles, then strode to one of the great embrasures. As he put back the curtain, there was a wild dash of rain on the window. McIvor stared out. In the darkness he saw Viola leaning, nearer—nearer—to Gaunt—lifting his head—meeting his lips.

The storm that had sprung up suddenly, and without warning, was born at once into fury. A wind that had swept across leagues of ocean gave out a great diapason. McIvor longed to be out in the storm, for there was that in him that writhed in restraint—that cried aloud for freedom.

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Lady Adela, looking at his tall and motionless figure in the quiet room, felt reassured. Surely, he would not be so composed if there was much danger.

After what seemed hours to her, a footman came in softly and announced the doctor.

McIvor turned on his heel.

The doctor was old and tired, and accustomed to terrible things, that made the wound Gaunt had received, seem a mere scratch. Of course the young man must be careful—rest in bed—proper bandaging and diet. The serious thing, in the doctor's opinion, was that an attempt had been made on a life. As he spoke to McIvor, he had a feeling of keen anxiety to know how this land-owner would act, in this case.

“Did you see anything of the fellow?” he questioned.

“No.” McIvor moved towards the hall.

“But I mean to see him. I'm going into the village now—”

“Let me urge you not to. It would be quite unsafe, under the circumstances—and there is a big fellow of a storm on its way to us—”

McIvor cut him short. He flung himself into a heavy coat, pulled a cap down over his eyes, and plunged into the darkness. It seemed to open arms to receive him; the wind that buffeted, the rain that drenched him, the rocks over which he stumbled, and the black night into which he plunged, were a refuge. In it he was still tor-

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mented, but he was capable of thought that urged him to decision. His pride, like something fatally wounded that yet has strength to hide itself that it may die alone, demanded that he should keep this suffering secret.

But some one must pay. Some one from the village that he had worked and hoped for—that he had trusted to understand him, and that had struck at him. There he could strike back.

The proprietor of “Ye Labor in Vain” had thrown a dishpan of water over Alan Jones, who, after a little, sat up and tried in a dazed way to dry himself. The proprietor had then taken him by the elbows, and with an admonition to “go home,” put him outside, and signaled to his other guests to come back, which they did, with heightened spirits.

Perhaps the diversion of poor Griffiths’ fit, or the happy comparison of their healthy lives with his diseased one, made them gay. At any rate, new beer was called for, and young Jones was demanded to sing what he could remember of the music he had heard at the Eisteddfod.

Alan Jones, stirred temperamentally, was willing to oblige. Throwing back his dark head and closing his eyes, the better to aid his memory, he sent these words out, in a powerful and sweet, if untrained tenor:

“‘Grant, Oh God, thy Protection
And in Protection, Strength;
And in Strength, Understanding;

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And in Understanding, Knowledge;
And in Knowledge, the Knowledge of Justice;
And in the Knowledge of Justice, the love of it;
And in that love, the love of all Existence;
And in the love of all Existence, the love of God,
and all Goodness.' ”

McIvor strode in while the Goredd Prayer was being sung. But he waited in shadow, until it was finished.

Jones, evidently proud of his powers, repeated the last line:
“‘And in the love of all Existence, the love of God, and all Goodness.’ ”

CHAPTER XIX

When Gaunt woke in the morning, his room was full of sunshine. His first sensation was that electric lights were burning very near his face, and that only by withdrawing his head under the covers could he escape their glare. Which act he tried to perform, but as he moved such sharp pain flashed through his shoulder and died throbbing in his hand, that he lay very still.

When he did that, events came back to him—not in orderly sequence, but turning as roundabouts do on which sit flying figures of youth that revolve about a central and musical support. Viola was the central figure in his thought. He had made an ass of himself—but—she had kissed him. A smile drew up the corners of his mouth. He murmured her name to the pillow.

“Little Viola—little Viola!”

Leone, who had been sitting by Gaunt’s bed, slipped out of the room, when she saw that he was awake, to tell Viola—but her mistress was not in the tower room nor in any of the drawing rooms.

Still searching Leone found McIvor’s man Tay, and from him received the information that Mrs. McIvor had waited in her husband’s dressing room all night, and that the “master” had not yet returned from the village. Men had been sent to

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Glas Ogven only this morning, to relieve Mrs. McIvor's anxiety.

As Leone listened, she looked puzzled—her step slackened, but a recollection of Gaunt's *beaux yeux* prodded her on. And she found Viola, in a dark morning gown, walking up and down in McIvor's study.

“Madame! M’sieur is awake!”

Viola turned swiftly. A look of intense relief passed over her face.

“He has come back, Leone? Where is he?”

“But M’sieur Gaunt, Madame! He is asking for you.”

Viola’s expression of joy faded. Leone, watching her, murmured, with a baffled accent:

“*C'est Anglais!*” and departed.

And Viola continued her pacing back and forth of the little room, and her thoughts their weary repetition of uncertainty.

Last night Ian had been different. Viola had felt intuitively that McIvor, in his apparent disregard, was in reality more intent upon her than he had ever been. And the hope that she was for once first in his thoughts made Viola rejoice.

But he had been very strange—and he had gone, in spite of and as though he had not heard her entreaties, into the village—into danger—and he had not come back.

It seemed to Viola as though she were in some nightmare land, enfolded in such fog as had encompassed them last night, and through which

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she now vainly tried to see. Leone's interruption, with word from Gaunt, made her think of him for a moment, with warm pity and gratitude, but she turned from the remembrance of his face, to pursue, in thought, the mysterious aloofness of McIvor's, that seemed for a moment to look at her with understanding, only to evade, to leave her in ignorance.

There was a soft tap at the door, and Lady Adela, dressed in "something warm" in tone, as well as in texture, answered Viola's "Come in."

Lady Adela's hair seemed in some remarkable way to express the state of her being. To-day, its gray locks, though gathered in a small knot on the top of her head, defied restraint, and stood up around her face in quivering strands. She was full of soft emotion and thankfulness that her boy was safe.

"Dear Viola, do come—now, and see Harold."

At sight of her aunt's evident agitation of happiness, Viola was ashamed that she herself had taken so slight a part in the general rejoicing that Harold had come off so easily. As she remembered how he got his hurt, her pale cheeks flushed. She took her aunt's hand eagerly.

"Of course! I'm so anxious to see him—he really saved my life, you know, Aunt Adela."

Harold was raised a little in the bed, but his bandaged arm and shoulder were covered. The sheet was drawn up to his chin; over it and against

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the white pillow, his face and bright brown hair looked full of vitality. The bistre circles of pain under his eyes only made their blue gaze, as they sought Viola's face, more ardent.

Moving quietly, Viola drew a chair near the bed and sat down. A curious constraint came upon her. All the sympathy and real gratitude she felt for Gaunt were checked—arrested by the way he looked at her. As he did that she could only think of one thing. She had kissed him. He had not forced her—done it against her will. She had bent down—put her lips to his.

It had meant so little to her that she had not thought of it until now. She remembered her impulse of tenderness towards him—that had surely something of the maternal in it, and that some women feel for man when he is shorn of his powers and made dependent upon them.

As she looked at this young and strong man, whose eyes summoned her, Viola felt that she had betrayed herself to an enemy.

But the enemy was smiling. He put out his uninjured hand and took hers—took it with a strong clasp.

“How good of you to come—but you are all goodness to me.”

Viola tried to free her hand. Gaunt put it to his lips—kissed it, and let it go. His voice sounded warm with happiness.

It seemed to Viola that he was in the warmth, in some glorious country of the south, where

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“the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard
row.”

while she dwelt alone, in this bitter north. Viola did not know how to answer him. She felt that she did not know anything—that life was too much for her. With a great effort she conquered her dumb devil.

“You’re not badly hurt, Harold?”

“No, Viola—it’s the merest scratch—”

“Do you remember—?” Viola paused.

“I remember last night—and—always will—that and the first time I saw you. Don’t ask me to forget, Viola—don’t ask it—”

As Viola listened to his voice that was full of ardour sprung from his love of her, she felt utter astonishment at her action on the moor.

Gaunt went on speaking. His voice, hurried, husky, would not have been recognized by Mrs. Lathrop, but the language that he spoke she would have quite understood. To Viola, it was a strange tongue. She felt his emotion, his distress, sympathetically, and would have been glad, if she could, to have soothed it. From his halting but oddly violent words, she glimpsed as through a murky atmosphere the debatable lands of love that he longed to explore with her as his companion. That Gaunt hoped to do so did not occur to her any more than did a feeling of offense at his outburst. She was as oddly unconscious of evil in Harold as she was of purity in herself.

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Gaunt saw that, and his manhood almost worshipped Viola—and the fiery, shamed hope that he had felt, died.

“You look sorry for me—” he almost faltered.

Viola stood up and moved away to the window.

“I am sorry, Harold—and for myself, too. I’m selfish. Perhaps that’s why—I’ve missed the only thing that matters, the only thing that can make life real, or beautiful. It’s not enough to love—that may be like a gift to one that has too much; and it’s not enough to be loved—that may be like stealing—it must come to both, alike, and I think, dear Harold, it hardly ever does.”

“I know one thing, Viola, I’d rather give my gift—my love—to you—than have any made to me. I’m going away—but you’ll remember that, won’t you? You’ll promise me that, if there’s ever a chance—you’ll let me do something, anything for you?”

There was nothing in Harold’s words now that Mrs. Lathrop had ever heard or could even imagine. Viola did not realize the change—she only knew that she felt terribly lonely again, and very sad. And sad not only for herself.

“If there’s ever anything, Harold, that you can do, I promise.”

But surely there never would be. Desires of high romance, Viola thought of Harold’s with her own, might hang their splendid colors in the dim halls of imagination, but at the touch of reality

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they would vanish away into the "stuff that dreams are made of."

When Viola stepped into the corridor and long hall that led to McIvor's rooms, she was conscious at once of movement—excitement, in the house. But she did not make any effort to discover what it was, or whether McIvor had come home. Instead, she sought the little tower room whose windows, after the storm, showed a delicately blue and veiled expanse of sea and sky. Viola slipped on a white dressing gown, and moved a chair as near as she could to the windows, and let her gaze wander out from her eyrie into the far horizon, deliberately withdrawing herself from the activities she had been aware of in the house.

An emphatic knock and the hurried entrance, after Viola's rather languid "Come in," of Pamela, brought another atmosphere into the room. Pam was neatly, almost severely, dressed in dark blue serge. Her hair was drawn back from her forehead and fastened in a resentful-looking knot at the back of her head. Her eyes, with their thin lids traced by tiny veins, looked hot and dry, as though they burned—and her ruddy cheeks were heightened oddly in color.

She cleared her throat, making a queer little sound before she spoke.

"I've looked everywhere, Vi!"

Viola withdrew her eyes from the cloudy spaces.

"For what, Pam?"

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“For you, of course. I only wondered that you didn’t hear us, and come down into the hall.”

“Us?”

Viola rose, stepped nearer her cousin. A tiny pulse began to beat in her throat.

“Ian is here—has come home?”

Pam, whose eyes did not meet Viola’s shook her head.

“No. It was a man from the village, with news—for you—for all of us. There’s war.”

She spoke as though it were not of real importance—as though she mentioned it to gain time for something else. Her voice was almost dull.

“It’s nothing much, I think. But the villagers will be settled out of hand, and that’s as well, too.”

Viola steadied herself by taking Pamela’s arm. The arm was yielded to her as a crutch might have been—to give physical support. It did not compromise Pamela with any human attributes of sympathy.

“What do you mean, Pam? War—with whom? and how will it settle the villagers—and where—is Ian?”

Pamela looked away.

“He’s gone—his things are to be sent on. I was to tell you—he sent me this note.” Pamela fumbled with a single sheet of paper that she had thrust into her gown. But she did not refer to it.

“Ian belongs, you know, to the Royal Engineers—and he wanted to go at once, naturally, it was

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right for him. They heard the news in the village last night—and so, of course, he's gone."

"Of course—he's gone."

Viola repeated the little words with her lips; and Pamela, feeling as though she had struck at a guilty person only to find them innocent, went out.

Viola had loved thoughts, visions, ideals of beauty and romance. She had applied them unconsciously to every act of her life—she had followed them, blindly, but only in their flower. From the roots of fact that must be tended and watered with tears—from the stalks of daily life, that must push up through earth before they may bear a perfect bloom, she had looked away.

She had disliked common things, ordinary people. The knowledge of her parents' tragedy had crowned them for her, with the triumph of life.

And how was it now with her own marriage? Always, she had seen love as a star—and Ian—had he not seen the star first as a world teeming with human lives?

Perhaps, he had the nearer vision, but it shut Viola away. The villagers, their needs and hopes, and the voice of the poor, Ian had heard. It had followed him into the south—it had been with him in the north—it led him now into a strange country. And always the voice of the many was stronger than the voice of one—the cry of the wretched more poignant than the love whisper of one woman.

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Ian need not have searched far, Viola thought; he could have found at home a poverty to enrich—a life to lift up—a heart to make glad.

CHAPTER XX

Lady Mordaunt and Pamela made Harold's departure the next week the excuse for their own. And Viola saw them go with relief. From London they sent her news, in its then incipiency, of the Great War, and Viola, alone in her walled retreat, read it as something only vaguely sinister.

The lamentations of Leone at their isolation, the depressing society of the Reverend Macready who had adopted as an *idee fixe* the outrage of disendowment, were far more real to Viola than any anxiety about England's action and McIvor and Harold Gaunt's part in it.

A short note had come from Ian, after six weeks, from a "Military Works" bungalow in Chakrata, India. It was a very curious note, indeed. When Viola took the square blue envelope, with her name on it in a firm and abrupt handwriting, the emotion that she felt angered, astonished her, and she slipped the letter unopened into a book of Mrs. Browning's poems, and forced herself to wait until the next day before reading it.

The few lines contained a curt apology, but no explanation, for leaving Trevwithin without seeing her. He urged Viola to feel perfectly free to go or come as she chose—inclosed a generous check, and concluded briefly, after a sentence appreciative of

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the Himalayas, with the remark, that the war would probably be over, and he at home, in three months at most.

Viola, searching through the non-committal words for a trace of feeling, put the letter back, between the pages of "Sonnets from the Portuguese."

McIvor's name, signed "Yours—Ian," touched the words,

"My letters all dead paper—mute and white!—
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the
string—"

And Viola's hands had trembled.

In London, Evelyn Malloring, in an access of energy, looked up—and investigated—the "dejected married person" that had pursued Harold Gaunt with such extraordinary if unfortunate ardour.

Mrs. Lathrop was installed in somewhat sultry grandeur at the Ritz, and there Lady Malloring's always acquisitive interest had fastened upon her.

Mrs. Lathrop's blond head, crowned with a flamboyant hat, was turned with deference to a very young man that Sir John and Lady Malloring knew quite well. The young man first looked devilish, then conscious, and at Sir John's reluctant approach, miserable. He and Malloring exchanged a few words, when Lady Evelyn bore down upon the group, put a proprietary hand on Sir John's sleeve, and made a complete if somewhat hurried

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inventory of Mrs. Lathrop, under which that lady became red and restive—and Sir John, acutely uncomfortable, drew his wife away.

“I knew it,” said Lady Evelyn. “That gossip is every word of it true. The creature’s got no looks—no pride—no anything—She’s soft, soft—and sticky—she’s like mush—poor young man. Fancy a diet of mush—old mush!”

“My dear!”

Sir John, seeing Mme. du Guenic, approached her with relief, cast Lady Evelyn upon her hands, and made a discreet retreat. His wife’s remarks sometimes made a disturbing commotion in the little shrine he had set up in his heart for her worship.

Mme. du Guenic, suppressing her boredom, smiled kindly at Lady Evelyn.

“I like your husband,” she said.

“What, Johnny?”

Lady Evelyn’s eyebrows performed half circles of astonishment.

The elder woman smiled.

“Are you astonished at my perception of—the grande passion?”

Lady Malloring gasped, “you don’t mean—”

“I do mean—that it is refreshing—to see a man that loves his wife—as Sir John does you. Forgive my eccentric speech. I am alone—you know—”

Her companion broke in hurriedly. She was always uncomfortable out of the shallows.

“Why don’t you take a trip?”

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Mme. du Guenic started—gave a half laugh.

“I believe you are really divinatory! I’m going to, if I can persuade my niece, Viola, to go with me.”

“How fascinating! Of course she’ll go. She can’t stay alone on that rock in Wales—and Mr. McIvor’s gone to India, I heard.” A look of malice crossed her pretty face.

“Perhaps you, Mrs. McIvor, and Mrs. Lathrop will go out on the same steamer—poor Gaunt is back in Kairpur—and I believe the creature, balked of her prey, will pursue it—”

Madame du Guenic laughed. “We are all God’s creatures,” she said, and added without profanity, “and His works are indeed wonderful.”

Lady Adela and Pam, who were stopping for a few weeks at the Ritz, had a letter from Viola that told of her acceptance of Mme. du Guenic’s invitation. Viola did not give her real reason for this journey. In fact, she denied it to herself, pretending that indifference to her husband would allow her to go near, without seeing him. And Trevwithin was impossible. The loneliness of the sea-haunted rooms, the silent sky, the eerie beauty of the strange and almost violent mountain country, was terrible to Viola. And once again, from love, she turned to her mother’s sister.

Pamela, when she finished the note that she had read aloud to her mother, stood up, extracted a handkerchief that she had purchased at a benefit bazar, and that was extremely stiff, from her dress

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and blew her nose. The action, accomplished with force and thoroughness, rendered her principle feature more prominent than usual. It caught Lady Adela's sad and wandering eye, and fixed her gaze.

Pamela, watching her mother was seized by a longing foreign surely to her Britannic nature, to astonish Lady Adela with words like these:

“If I didn’t have such a *nose*, such a face, I would be going to India to Harold! It’s not worth, it’s not love, that counts for men—it’s looks, faces, noses!”

But she did not do that. She remarked somewhat at length upon the pleasure Viola would undoubtedly enjoy on this trip. But Lady Adela did not at once agree with her.

“I’ve a queer guilty feeling about Viola, Pam. You know, she left us before with her aunt, and of course her marriage would naturally change her, but she’s never seemed the same child to me. She used to be a happy thing; do you remember how Harold—” Lady Adela checked herself, but Pamela said, in an even voice:

“How Harold and she used to ride together that summer before she went away! And how she used to sing to him! Yes, I do remember it.”

But Lady Adela still looked troubled.

“I’ve always felt guilty about her being married away from us—it’s as though I had shirked my responsibility—and somehow, this going away again—”

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She broke off to continue curiously, "But she may join Ian, and I think that they are happy, don't you, Pam?"

Her voice begged for an affirmative. But Pamela did not give it, exactly.

"I think Ian is deeply in love with Viola, as all the men she ever knew, are."

Lady Adela's sense of the proprieties revolted.
"Pam!—were."

Pamela went close to her mother and looked into her eyes.

"No," she said, "are—are in love with her."

"Well, she is happy with Ian, Pam?"

But this time Pamela did not answer her mother at all, but went to her own room and closed the door. Walking to the bed with furtive steps, Pamela flung herself face down upon it, caught with her hands at the pink and blue roses carved on the head of the bed, bit her pale lips through which sobs forced their way, hid her eyes in a pillow, and drenched it with bitter tears.

While her body shook in a storm of emotion, Pamela's mind struggled with a foe. Curiously enough, it was not her love for Harold that she longed most to be rid of, but a feeling toward Viola, of such power that it frightened her. It was so intense at times, that if she could not be alone, could not give way physically to the anguish of jealousy and hurt love that racked her, Pamela felt that she might do any mad thing that would hurt, even wrong Viola, that would make her

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suffer a little perhaps as she herself suffered. But Pamela did not want to give way, did not want to be mastered by the force of her passion. She fought with anguish to subdue it.

To have an infinite capacity of devotion to another—to smother, deny, refute it—to have that capacity change by a hideous alchemy into a power of hatred, loathing, jealousy of another, a woman like herself—Pam denied that, not in the least like herself, but a woman caught in the waste and cruelty of life, no less if differently than she—was to know oneself outraged.

As she lay on the bed, exhausted but calm again, Pam heard her mother moving about and speaking in the sitting-room. Presently Lady Adela tapped on Pam's door, and urged her in a voice that sounded happy to come out at once—that there was a surprise waiting for her.

Pam got up slowly. She felt a little faint; her head throbbed, and her clothes were bunched up, disordered, and her face was swollen.

When she came into the sitting-room ten minutes later Viola, who was the surprise, thought Pamela looked sleepy, as though she had been suddenly wakened.

“What a *shame* to get you up—I’m sure you were in the midst of some delightful dream. One is always waked from the nice ones, though—”

Viola gave an apologetic little laugh. Pamela did seem dazed and cross.

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"I came almost with my letter, Aunt Adela. Poor Leone—how she worked like a Fury packing all our things in one night! Tante Hortense has our passage on a good boat, and I really think we will have a pleasant trip. But tell me about yourselves. You're well—and happy, dear?"

"Oh, we!" Lady Adela threw up her hands. "We're comfortable and well situated here for our shopping, which Melon told me we had to do, but we are not exciting, my dear, as you are, so tell us your plans."

Since Pamela had come into the room, Viola had felt a restraint. She loved to talk with her aunt—to go into descriptions of her frocks that Lady Adela doted on, and to dwell on all the details of her life. To do so before Pam, however, cost her an effort.

Viola was dressed in a close-fitting tan walking costume, a small velvet hat covered with violets, and some very beautiful Russian sables. The richness of the fur about her face emphasized its delicate contour, the ivory white of the cheeks, the red droop of the lips, and her large eyes that had always held a look of sadness, of melancholy, seemed to Lady Mordaunt to hold an added wistfulness today. Perhaps the knowledge that Viola was going on what seemed to Lady Adela a long and perilous journey influenced her; at any rate, Lady Mordaunt felt her love and tenderness for Viola increased, as some one who has been always

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dear to us, becomes infinitely more so when they are going from us.

At any rate, Lady Adela insisted on making a fuss over her niece. Tea, and very special cakes were sent up, the fire was lit, and the curtains drawn to shut out the dreary autumn afternoon.

“Just where will you be, my dear? Near Ian?”

“Oh dear, no, Aunt—Ian is up in what they call ‘The Snows’; it’s two days’ journey from Kairpur, where we will be.”

Pamela put her hand over her eyes. Lady Adela saw the motion and looked about for a fire screen.

“Don’t bother, Mater. Kairpur is where Harold is stationed, isn’t it, Viola?”

Viola turned eagerly toward Pam. It was the first question her cousin had asked.

“Yes; that’s what makes it so pleasant. We won’t feel so lone and strayed—with Harold. And now, dear Aunt, if you will give me messages for your boy, and a kiss for myself, I must really say goodby. You must not think of docks—Tante Hortense can’t bear to be seen off, and they sadden me—farewells snatched at the waters’ brink!”

Lady Adela took Viola tenderly in her arms, pressed a copy of “Blackwoods” into her hand for Dr. Wimbish, wept a little, but waved a gallant farewell.

Pamela, seeing that the fire needed attention, gave it hers, and blacked herself so she could not take her cousin’s hand, or even kiss her.

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When Viola had gone, and Lady Mordaunt was sitting rather sadly and looking at the castles for old age that the obliging fire made, Pamela went into her own room, locked the door, seated herself at the writing-desk and began a letter to Ian McIvor.

CHAPTER XXI

It was on a very still day that Viola and Mme. du Guenic, Mrs. Lathrop and a disgruntled Globe trotting man who traveled to write, and wrote to live, arrived in Kairpur.

Mrs. Lathrop, who had through the facilities of travel and the coincidence of destination, established a certain acquaintance with Mme. du Guenic and Viola, insisted hospitably on opening her bungalow to them, while they looked about at leisure for themselves. Mrs. Lathrop had not given the invitation to Mme. du Guenic, but chose Viola as the medium. And Viola, seeing how the poor thing flushed, looked eager and sensitive too, consented for one night at least, and asked her aunt about it later.

Mme. du Guenic was amused, and though she had barely seemed aware of Mrs. Lathrop's existence, she made no protest beyond a shrugged shoulder and a murmur, "*Qu'est ce que c'est?*"

The rains are due about the middle of June. It was the sixteenth day of that month that Mrs. Lathrop opened the door of her bungalow—that was like the inside of a limekiln—to her guests. After they had refreshed themselves slightly with cool drinks and the punkah wallah, which Mrs. Lathrop had wired to a friend to secure for her,

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had been set to work, she took them gasping, up to the roof.

They looked out over a mass of trees of curious and beautiful foliage, amongst whose green, brilliant parrots flashed, and bougainvillea twined its purple flowers. The winding of the jungle lane could be seen where it skirted the garden wall that was painted a dull yellow. An old mallec Brahmin by the sign of the sacred string over his right shoulder and under his left arm, sat in the shelter of the wall and the fern fronds that grew out of it, and smoked his peaceful bubble-bubble.

Beyond Mrs. Lathrop's compound was the white gleam of a marble temple, carved with strange gods and given over to bats and desolation. In the west that seemed so near that you could put your hand on it, flamed a sky like a conflagration.

The trees of the jungle spread their distorted branches, that looked like creatures writhing in distress, against this background that was the color of flame, of passion, of war, and blood. In coming to the East Viola had hoped to find peace, calm, a suspense of her uncertainties. The place seemed teeming with violence from the parched earth to the crimson sky.

"It will be better when the rains come," Mrs. Lathrop put in anxiously. "At least, it will be different. Everything will be mouldy—the plaster will come off the walls—the pictures will curl up and drop out of their frames, and when we go out

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we will pay for a boat, but be content with 'brollies' and 'goloshes.' However, we will be cooler and can have parties."

Mme. du Guenic moved away from her hostess. "We'll not be here long, you know—as soon as we have seen our cousin—"

"Mr. Gaunt?"

The tone held a little asperity—and something else. Mme. du Guenic ignored it. Very soon she left the extraordinary sunset and went down to her cot on the matting.

Mrs. Lathrop detained Viola, when she would have followed her aunt.

"You will let Harold know you are with me, won't you?"

Viola turned in surprise, as much at the tone as the words. Mrs. Lathrop's voice sounded as though it were taking off its clothes. She hurried on, "Oh, I dare say you don't know what to think of my calling him by his first name. But I want to tell you. I heard something in London that made me very unhappy, but that I was bound to find out about. It was about You—and Harold." Her rather small blue eyes set in a maze of fine lines sought Viola's face.

"When your husband went off that way—there was talk, you know. Hadn't you a French maid?"

Viola, her face burning, tried to enter the house. Mrs. Lathrop put two hands on her shoulders.

"No—! hear me out. Oh, I know what I am—and I don't care if I do give myself away to you.

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I'd rather do that than not know the truth—and he'll never tell it to me."

Her lips trembled. The whole face looked suddenly years older, yet animated with a force of determination, of will.

"Do you care about him? Oh, tell me—tell me—I'd have no chance against you—if you did: but *please I must know.*"

Viola was singularly lacking in British "pudeur." There was much in Mrs. Lathrop that she shrank from—that her delicacy perceived as base metal—but aside from that, and the fact that her own reserves were being outrageously attacked, a wave of sympathy for the wretched little woman kept her where she was, helped her to say "No," emphatically—clearly, in a way that carried conviction. And Mrs. Lathrop took advantage of Viola's sympathy. She drew her down into a rattan chair, pulled another up beside it, and gave Viola the story of her intrigue with Gaunt. And she naturally gave her own version.

The hot breath of India stirred faintly in the deodars—the red light faded in the west, and a velvet black sky, pierced with brilliant stars, was over them before Mrs. Lathrop had finished her story. Night comes swiftly in the East—there is only a moment's pause between the flaming day and the ardent night.

Viola felt, as she listened to the hurrying voice, shamed—and yet in a way, triumphant, as though

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she must have, in some way, lost her own identity, to have become the confidante of such secrets.

Mrs. Lathrop caught Viola's hand.

"Feel!" she said. "It's over my heart. You can feel how my heart beats—just to speak of him—Don't you see, I can't stand it? He must come to me—he must!"

Viola withdrew her hand. She felt as though she had touched fire.

"Have you—told him you are here?"

"I wrote from London—" Mrs. Lathrop wailed, "weeks before I left, when I would be here. He won't answer—he wants it to end."

Viola stood up. "I'm afraid I can't help you."

"Oh, but you can! He's stationed, you know, only a few miles from here in the plains. He's doing special work—there are only a few men with him, I think. If I should send the bearer with a note he would tear it up—and I don't dare go myself—" her hand tightened on Viola's arm. "But you are his cousin—he would listen to you!"

"To me!"

"Yes—I know he would. He cares for you—"

Gaunt's face rose up before Viola—she almost heard him saying, "If I can ever do anything for you, anything—" But this! How could she do such a thing. Gaunt did not love—this woman.

"He owes it to me—to see me once more. I've no money—my husband's left me—Ah, you will go—won't you?"

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“Yes,” breathed Viola. Then she went quickly into the house.

The next morning, Mme. du Guenic, who maintained she had not closed an eye all night, insisted on moving herself and her niece from Mrs. Lathrop’s roof.

It is a very simple thing to find accommodation—shelter, servants and food—in India if one is attached in even the most remote way to the Army.

Mme. du Guenic, attired in white linen, hailed a *ticca gharry*, and set forth, with Viola masterfully, to choose a home. She found a particularly unhealthy if exotic-looking house, with its back to the road, and chose it at once, probably because it was painted pink—and was in every way a decided contrast to Mrs. Lathrop’s yellow one. She also secured an excellent bearer—who was charmed with her generous and incurious manner of attending to business.

After a very fair dinner of roasted “moorghy,” which Mrs. Lathrop had not been invited to share—to Viola’s embarrassment—Madame du Guenic made a casual remark. She was in evening dress—and looked as *coiffe*, as composed, as she ever had in the most luxurious setting.

“Ian is coming to us soon, isn’t he, Viola? This is all very well as a curiosity, but the heat, *cherie!* and that astonishing person! By the way, Ian went very unexpectedly—”

“Yes, Tante Hortense.” Viola’s breath came quickly.

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“*Jalousie, ma cherie?*”

With one of her rare, but very winning smiles, Mme. du Guenic swept Viola into her arms. Her brown eyes, which were usually mocking, looked suddenly tender.

“Write to him, child, tell him to come. He loves you—and he thinks you played with him.”

“But how?”

“*Le beau* cousin! Think. Did nothing occur?”
Viola blushed scarlet.

“Ah—you see! Set him right.

“Did you think I undertook this pilgrimage for a whim? Any more than you thought your husband was obliged to leave without a word to you? I had it from the excellent, the foolish Aunt Adela. I have waited for you to speak, but you did not. *Ma cherie*, I know men. The cousin is *bon enfant*—he is melodious—*simpatica!* but he is ephemeral!

“Get your husband back, my child—he is a man.”

“But Tante Hortense, you don’t understand. Ian doesn’t love me at all. He was always thinking of the villagers—and yet he made them perfectly miserable by cutting down their wages when he need not have done so. He thought it was morally good for them.”

“Ah—I see.”

“And as for me—when I was not interested in reforms—when I was afraid to have—to have a child—”

“My dear, he cared for the villagers—and showed it by making himself hateful to them.

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“He loved his wife—and showed it by making her life unhappy. In short, he thought more of the life of your souls, than of anything else. He seems neither to have been successful, nor understood.”

Viola sprang up. “But he never talked to me! He chilled me! I was so lonely, so frightened in that great gloomy place. And I had seen a woman die—so—horribly.”

“And you, did you ever talk to him? Did you never chill him? Listen, Viola. I’m a worldly woman. I’ve cared for very little in my life—I’ve got very little from it. But all that I have had—that matters to me now—when I must look back upon life—is what I’ve had from love. Not from some one’s loving me—but from my loving them. And I mean more than that—I mean loving and being loved, completely, in every sense, by my husband. It’s what matters most—though when I had it I did not realize it—and I did not think of it for you. It’s in your reach, little Viola—write to him.”

When she went to her room, Viola sat a long time over a note she directed to Ian. She felt quite shy—quite timid about it, but she was happier than she had been since her marriage.

The letter did not reach McIvor—as he received Pamela’s on the evening that Viola wrote to him.

CHAPTER XXII

To Chamkrata is four days' journey from Calcutta. By train through the rice country of Behares, where miles of delicate green plants seem like the flowers of the water they stand in, beyond Mogulserai with its flat red roofs, its Eastern mosques, across the bridge of the Ganges, and beyond Benares, with her minarets piercing the blue, past Lucknow and her memory of blood, to Sahranpore. From there by *dâh-gharry*, ascending, gradually, through silvery green bamboo and wild white balsam that grows on the rocks, to Dehra, in the valley, where the breath of the great snows falls as softly on her roses as the ring dove's note on the ears of those who love.

McIvor had taken that journey, but he had not seen its beauties. From Dehra the ascent was made on muleback, over rocks skirting precipices, clinging to a ragged spur of the great brown mountain, down whose side roared foaming torrents, twisting and curving, he had come at last into a great white silence.

In the midst of it, on a pinnacle of rock, built over a sheer depth, was the isolated Military Station, the bungalow of which he was to take possession.

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When McIvor had heard the news of the war at "Ye Labor in Vain," he had seized upon it as the means of a personal escape. It had come between him—and violence. The rage he had felt against Harold Gaunt he had hoped to vent, for Viola's sake and his own, against the man who had shot at him on the moor. But that punishment had been taken from him—David was chastened by a heavier Hand than his.

Without speaking to the astonished inn-keeper, McIvor had written a few lines to Pamela and his man Tay, and had then flung out again into the storm. All night he walked in it, and in the morning started for London. Every mile of the journey had struck at him, with memories of Viola.

In the solitude of the Himalayas in the awful isolation he had sought, McIvor felt himself a spot of corruption in the purity of the snow. But he felt also that all mankind was that, a blot, a sin upon the beauty of the world.

His duties were not many, but they had to be attended to regularly, and a small garden that held dahlias, ox-eye daisies, and curious blood red, single-petaled flowers, had been cared for by McIvor's predecessor, so that Ian felt it an obligation to see to them. And when he was busy with his strong, skillful hands, he did not think.

There were days when he would wake in the morning with astonishment at the stillness about him, with amazement at himself, as he realized

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where he was. He would be able to feel that what he had seen on the moor had, perhaps, been a trick of his own vision—had no real meaning in it—was the creature of his own mind. Then he would recall bit by bit the action of the picture that had never left him since he saw it. He would see Gaunt's face; then his own hands would clench in a separate life of their own, and long to press hard, cruelly, until the breath should be caught, stifled, driven, from Gaunt's body.

All thought of Glas Ogven, of his duties towards the villagers that had been for years the subject of his earnest and beneficent intentions and activities, had gone from him, as though his brain had never held it. All the ideality that had been in his love for Viola—all images of her as his spiritual companion, as the mother of his children, the mistress of his home—had gone, as though they had been drawn upon a slate and a hand had been passed over them.

He remembered his past actions—his attitude of mind, as one sane would regard the posturings of a mad man. He had let his wife, his wife be won from him—in his own home—by a man she had not seen more than twice in her life. And Ian, as he thought of that, as he remembered his preoccupation with the morale of the village, felt himself to have been almost idiot—less than man.

The native postmaster, with mail for Chakrata, left his little cart with the gaily tinkling bells far

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down on the comparatively broad slope of the brown mountain, and progressed once a week, on a lean horse, to McIvor's bungalow. On the day that Viola wrote her note to Ian, Pamela's, sent from London, reached him.

It was not a long letter, but it took McIvor some time to read it. When he had finished, scenes rose up before him.

Viola and Gaunt were only three days' journey from him.

And they were together.

There was also an official notice asking him to report to his chief. That night McIvor descended the mountain.

CHAPTER XXIII

Mrs. Lathrop was not at any time easily discouraged, and her shrewdness had divined the weakness of pity that was Viola's, and that had been awakened on her behalf. So she played upon it. Her last and most effective appeal was to take Viola into the chintz-hung bedroom of her bungalow and exhibit a wardrobe, marked by the ravages of time.

"What can I do with it?" she had asked, turning her blond head to one side, and holding up a gown for inspection. The gown was full where it should have been scant—marked indubitably as a souvenir of a past decade.

"It's been done over twice, but surely something can be managed?" Mrs. Lathrop's blue eyes had sought Viola's face anxiously.

"Since my husband left me because of Harold, I literally haven't a penny, you know—so I shall have to be as clever as I can about my clothes. Do you mind if I ask your advice about my things?"

And Viola had not minded. But the sight of Mrs. Lathrop's painful contriving, in the face of the open hostility of feminine Kairpur, the absence of her lover, and her apparent lack of funds, was too much for Viola. She stood up, abruptly.

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"If you like—I'll go—to Harold. Today—if I can find a guide. He must do something for you—he can't know."

In a remarkably short time Kali Bagh—who still preserved a beautiful serenity—had provided a horse and a slim black boy of the Hindustani, to act as guide.

Mrs. Lathrop's gratitude had been effusive. Viola had freed herself with difficulty from an almost violent embrace, to make arrangements for her journey. The distance was not great, and by leaving in the heat it would be possible to return by nine at least.

Viola moved about in her curious little room, while she waited for the guide. It was very still and filled with a peculiar odor that the intense heat drew out into the room. Brilliant and very white sunlight seemed to drip through the closed shutters.

Viola dressed carefully in a white linen riding costume, took a small purse that was well filled, and then, impatient of waiting, went into the compound. A cloud of dust very soon announced her escort. All Kairpur was sleeping or in retreat from the sun. No one saw Viola go. She was taken by the road that led through trees whose foliage was gray with dust, to the plains.

As she followed her guide, Viola was at first almost overpowered by the heat of the sun, and when she closed her eyes, flashes of red passed before them. She felt at first dazed—confused—

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but after an hour's riding, the object of her journey came, sharply, into her mind. Viola thought of Harold, as she had last seen him—tried to recall the sound of his voice, as he had begged her to ask “anything of him, anything.” But her thoughts were kaleidoscopic—like the colors that passed before her eyes. Images of McIvor, Harold, Dora, Macready, Pamela, and the incidents that had joined their lives to her own, invaded Viola's mind, with a persistent confusion. She remembered her childhood sensitized by imaginative and ideal dreams of her mother.

After three hours going by a devious and winding lane that passed through a tangle of low growing jungle, the green and rank vegetation vanished. Viola and her guide emerged into an open plain that was covered with gray sand. As they had left the jungle behind them, so too had they left the day. It was as though a hand had wiped out the light, and set a great darkness in its place. A wind had sprung up that was cold and keen, that belonged to the night and whispered of the vast spaces it had traversed in its mysterious life. It touched Viola's face almost as living fingers might, and its touch filled her with fear, woke for the first time what was almost terror in her.

The guide stopped to get his bearings, then turned his horse toward the north. Against the far horizon, an aspiring line of luminous white marked the snows of the Himalayas. They looked unearthly—like immense angelic hosts uniting for

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a moment the earth and heavens. As Viola watched a crimson moon was born into the sky—and the plain was drenched in light. And her fear grew.

In a few moments the camp of the men came into sight—beyond it, and situated by a group of ragged palm trees and a well, was Harold Gaunt's tent. The friend of Kali Bagh dismounted, made certain, and then pointed a slim brown hand.

“Gaunt Sahib.”

Viola dismounted. She was still assailed by fear of the night and of the power of feeling that was moving in her, but which she did not understand.

Beneath the tragic light of the moon, the white sands stirred as a leper might when he felt that only the night and the moon could look upon him. And in Viola the elemental, real and terrible yearning that is in the heart of every woman, that puts out hands to be loved and protected and understood by man, stirred with new life. And with it anger against McIvor, and shame that she had felt shame for her love of him. For love is truth and to deny it is to deny God.

Moving forward swiftly to the tent, Viola paused a moment under the rustling leaves of the palms that moved with a dry and arid sound like the sound made by the lips of a patient who is parched with fever and thirst. And it seemed to Viola that her own misery, of a woman who was starved for love, but could feel love, was answered and multiplied by the surrounding mysteries of the desert,

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the trees, the homeless, wandering wind, which seemed symbols of humanity: hunger, thirst, and starvation of soul. Understanding of herself, of the desolation of life without love, flooded Viola, as the moonlight flooded the sand, making darkness visible.

From the pool of bitter water came the thin note of some wild bird, pausing in its flight, for refreshment, returning perhaps to its nest among the reeds. The tiny sound heard in the great spaces and uttered with the authority of its own individuality, seemed to Viola infinitely touching and, in a way, comforting. The bird in the wilderness was sustained on its course by invisible guides; should not the soul of a woman caught in misunderstanding and solitude not trust and rely upon the power that made it, to sustain it?

Looking down into the pool that was deep, unruffled, with a dark, glassy surface, Viola saw the stars reflected and she thought of how, when one looks into the face of a very good person, one seems to see there in their eyes the reflection of the heaven in which they believe.

With a quick step, Viola went to the tent, opened the flap and entered.

It was late when Harold Gaunt, leaving the camp of his companions, returned on foot to his own isolated tent. As he walked he sang in his strong, warm voice, "Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules." He had come for the third

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time to "But the ta-ra-ra-ra of the British grenadiers," and within twenty feet of the tent before he looked up and the song died on his lips. The side of the tent was made, by a lamp lighted within, into a shadow screen upon which two figures moved. When Gaunt saw the figures, which were those of a man and woman, he ceased to be conscious of anything else. With a fascination that riveted his attention, a sensation sickly, oppressive, tinged with horror, a sort of waking nightmare through which he seemed to look as in the crystal of a dream, held him powerless to move.

The shadow shapes upon the wall moved in a curious way; the man advancing, the woman retreating, the distance between them getting shorter and shorter as in some fantastic dance of slow and measured step, the one pursued, the other evaded. Suddenly the man's hand shot out and closed around the woman's throat and the two bodies swayed and writhed, striking the table and extinguishing the lamp. Then from the tent rose a single cry, hopeless, terrible, that pierced the silence as a sword thrusts through flesh. It seemed to shudder out and be lost in the desert beneath the glare of the moon and the white light of the pitiless stars. Then silence, calm, tremendous, vast, took possession of the night.

Harold Gaunt, running, stumbling, reached the door of the tent. His heart beat thickly in his ears, his mouth was parched. With hands that would hardly obey him, he tore back the door of the tent.

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The moon shone in and by its light Gaunt moved to what lay on the floor. With a desperate effort of will he bent down and looked. After a moment, he got up violently. "Come out," he called, in a voice that was shattered by tearing sobs. "Let me get to you!"

The silence between Gaunt and the other inhabitant of the tent was long. Presently it was broken by a sound that was faint and yet was like agony made audible. It was a whispering voice as dry as the sound of the palm leaves moving in the wind.

"How often has she come to you?"

"She—Good God, never!"

"Don't lie—are you a man? Come nearer."

"But, you brute, you fiend; she cared nothing for me."

The whispering voice went on.

"I saw you that time on the moor."

"But that—Oh God! I asked her to, and she was sorry for me because she knew that I cared while she cared for you—you—and you would not see it. You had her love—and you wouldn't take it—you didn't know—!"

From the blackness in which he had stood, and that was like the blackness of an abyss, McIvor stepped forward. The moonlight lit up his face, but it was ghastly, old, the face of a stranger. His eyes held Gaunt's. Harold saw McIvor's features alter, as his eyes read the truth in Gaunt's face, and unutterable sorrow rushed forth visibly to take possession, but he spoke in a stronger voice.

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“Will you leave us now?” then with a sigh, profound, terrible, he added, “I never knew what her love was!”

Blinded by tears, Gaunt rushed from the tent and threw himself down on the sand beside the pool into which Viola had looked. There were sounds in his ears that clamored like voices shouting “Murder.”

He could not think, but his nature seemed to have freed itself and to be the companion for the moment of the dead woman. He seemed to see her standing alone in the twilight that lay over illimitable space. And in this vast space, she was alone, watching, waiting for something she had never known and without which she must always be desolate, abandoned.

From the tent the report of a pistol rang out.

Voices of men from the camp were heard as they ran toward the tent. A dog lifted its voice in a shrill and melancholy howl.

But Harold Gaunt got suddenly to his feet. Upon his face was an expression of supreme happiness that was like a reflection caught from some unearthly vision. In the far distance in which for a moment he glimpsed Viola, Gaunt saw that now she was no longer alone.

Love had transcended life and death.

THE END

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